

THE BIG BOOK FOR BOYS

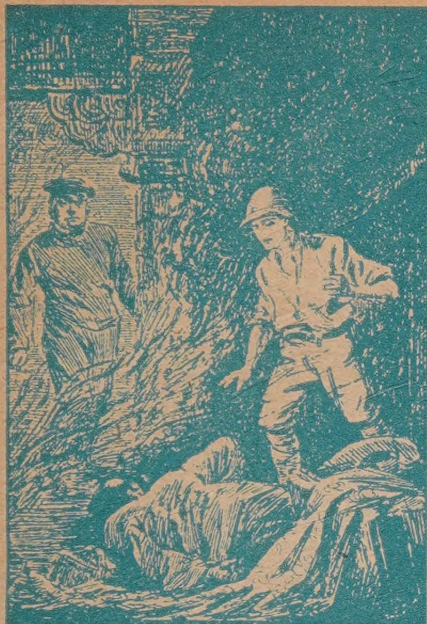


THE WINNER

With love
from Eileen + George



from The Oxford Annual
for Boys



Scenes from *The River Pirates*,
By Herbert Strang

of
the
from





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They surrounded him and patted his shoulders

THE BIG BOOK FOR BOYS

EDITED BY HERBERT STRANG



HUMPHREY MILFORD
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THE BIG BOOKS

THE BIG BOOK FOR BOYS

THE BIG BOOK OF RAILWAYS

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THE BIG BOOK OF ANIMAL
STORIES

THE BIG BOOK OF THE BIBLE

THE BIG BOOK FOR GIRLS

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THE BIG BOOK OF NURSERY TALES

THE BIG BOOK OF BEDTIME STORIES

HUMPHREY MILFORD

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For the Good of the Cause

By GUNBY HADATH



“WHY,” they demanded of Spratt, “are you always stodging?”

He was standing where you could always be sure of finding him when the grub shop had been opened a minute or two, to wit, by its counter. He stood sideways on, thus displaying to capital advantage how much can be done for a man by grub and no games. They used to say that you didn’t need drawing-lessons to draw old Sprattie when you looked at him sideways on. Any fool could draw the Western segment of a circle.

His right hand now gently fondled a sausage roll; his left was clutching one of those double-sized bottles of ginger beer which, wherever you go, are known as Magnums. To the fact that he never asked for the ordinary size he owed the name which the Fourth Form had given him—“The Magnum.”

“Oh, Magnum,” they persisted, “why do you stuff so?”

He responded first by passing the sausage rolls round and inviting all in his huskyish voice to “have one.” He next released a smile from the corners of his lips and let it very slowly expand, bit by bit, until you could hardly see his face for the smile. This was his patient smile, for which he was famous.

Sometimes he would stop it abruptly half-way; sometimes he would turn it right off from the full more quickly than you can turn off a running tap; sometimes he produced it without any cause (or none that was apparent to the beholders). Other times, when you expected it, it didn’t come. Never, at any time, was it followed by a laugh.

Nobody ever remembered hearing him laugh.

Coarse people said, “He daren’t laugh. He’d burst if he laughed!”

Having given them this smile, he withdrew it and spoke again.

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"Have a go," said he, "at these cheese cakes. They're jolly good fodder."

"But seriously, Magnum—why don't you give stodging a rest?"

"Why don't I?" he echoed blandly, his face like a mask now.

"Yes, old boy, why don't you? Why go on stuffing?"

"I stodge," said the Magnum, "for the good of the Cause."

"What cause?" they shouted.

"*The Cause*," he answered serenely.

That was all. He was too busy to talk any further.

But no busier than Vipont, and with the same subject—grub. Yet, whereas the Magnum was engaged in putting grub in, Vipont was engaged in keeping it out from the interiors of a congregation of kids. He seemed to have gathered all the kids in the House.

Lean of body, harsh of voice, and steely of eye, Vipont was a mighty man and a mighty runner. His admirers declared through the mouth of their spokesman—one, Vipont—that he could run as fast as a stag and as far as a camel. His detractors declared . . . but idle gossip is barred.

To the chastened and helpless assembly now in his study he indicated the trophies which shone on its walls. "Take a good squint," he commanded. "They are your object-lesson. They show you what a man can win when he runs well." Then he signalled out one handsome cup of chased silver. "You see that? That's the pot for the Senior Paperchase. I've won it now for two consecutive years, and next month when I've won it the third time it will be mine for keeps."

Too sadly aware where their taskmaster meant to arrive, Palfry Minor, dissimulator, trailed his red herring.

"You're certain to win it, aren't you, Vipont?" he piped. "Some silly goats think that Hammond has got an off chance. Would you say that Hammond——"

"I am sure to win. Now, once and for all, you young slacksters, understand this. The Junior Paperchase comes a few days before ours, and you've all got to get yourselves into proper trim for it. I'll make it my business to see that you do. If I catch you——"

"Please, Vipont, is it true that there's two pounds reward for anyone who catches the hares in your paperchase?"

"There is. Though it isn't called a reward. Now if I catch you kids slacking or——"

"Please! You call it a reward when you catch burglars, don't you?"

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What's the difference, Vipont, between money given for burglars and——"

"That's enough, Palfry. Now all of you mark my words. This year I'll put the whole shoot of you into strict train——"

"Please, Vipont, has anyone ever collared the hares? They can't, can they, Vipont? The hares have too long a start, and——"

Vipont scowled grimly on this earnest inquirer. "Palfry," barked he, "your tongue is too big for your boots——"

"Please, I don't keep my tongue in my boots——"

"Be quiet, you little snipe. As a matter of fact——"the great man had turned to the others—"I dare say this year will see the hares caught. By me. Now if——"

"Please, is it true that the two pounds comes from the Games Fund?"

"I suppose so, but it's never been won in my time. And if you open your mouth again, Palfry, I'll flay you. Listen! You slacksters start into proper hard training straight off. You'll run round the track every day——"

"Every day, Vipont?"

"Every day. Wet or fine. And no eating between meals. There'll be bad trouble if I catch you in Grubber. Do you hear?"

"Yes, Vipont," twittered twenty melancholy voices.

The twenty-first, which was Palfry's, said not a word.

"And what's more, you little pigs, you won't touch currant-roll on Thursdays. On Fridays you'll choose the rice pudding instead of the treacle tart. You'll leave off butter and sugar. Do you hear?"

"Yes, Vipont," quavered twenty heartbroken voices.

"Please, Vipont," piped the twenty-first, "may I say something?"

"You may," assented their slave-driver.

"Please, Vipont, is it necessary for small chaps like us to give up currant-roll and butter and sugar? And treacle tart, Vipont? I do hate rice pudding so. Besides, somebody told us that any ordinary healthy and sound boy doesn't require to be put into really fierce training. He says that any boy can keep in condition so long as he isn't always guzzling between meals."

Vipont jumped up. "Who told you that?" he cried fiercely.

Palfry Minor stood mute.

"Who told you it? Be quick! Or did you invent it?"

"No, I didn't," breathed Palfry in much alarm.

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"Who told you then? Was it anyone in this House?"

The great man's steely eye so bored through them all that Stockport Minimus, cowering, whispered: "Magnum."

"Who?"

"Please—Magnum."

"Out you get! All of you. Send him to me."

That rotund personage waddled in, out of breath. He was greeted with a fiery roar: "Your name Magnum?"

"Not yet," he said pleasantly.

"It isn't Magnum? You liar! I've heard people calling you. Don't play the fool with me. What *is* your hanged name?"

"S-p-r-o-double t—Sprott. That's my name."

"Sprott? Not it! I'll bet you were christened Jellyfish. I never saw such a prize pig in all my born days. Or perhaps your name's Porpoise? Yes! Porpoise is *your* name, my man!"

The Magnum looked him full in the face, very dreamily. "Viper isn't a bad name either," he murmured.

"I see," said Vipont, paling. "You'll pay me for that. Now, Mr. Sprott-Porpoise, why do you stodge so much?"

"Stodge?" queried the Magnum, unsmiling.

"Yes, stodge. From all accounts you're always in Grubber. Why do you guzzle and guzzle all day, you fat hound?"

"Do you want me really to tell you?"

"You'd better!" barked Vipont.

The Magnum drew a step nearer. His voice dropped confidentially. "Vipont," he whispered, "I stuff for the good of the Cause."

"The cause!" glared Vipont. "What cause?"

"Why, *the* Cause, Vipont."

"You'd better explain yourself. I'm not to be humbugged."

"Vipont," answered the Magnum, "I thought you'd twig at once. The Cause is the School."

"Do you mean to tell *me* that you gorge for the good of the School?"

"Of course I do, Vipont."

"You perfect liar!"

"But, Vipont," protested the Magnum, looking aggrieved, "don't the profits from Grubber go to the Games Fund?"

"Yes, of course."

"Then the more profit Grubber makes the better for the Games Fund?"

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"I suppose so," growled Vipont.

"Therefore, the more that people spend in Grubber, the better for the Games Fund?"

"Are you," glared the great man, "trying to fool me?"

"As if I should try to fool you, Vipont! Who would!"

"You'd better not!"

"No, of course not; no," said the Magnum smoothly. "So, Vipont, the more prosperous the Games Fund, the better for School games. Therefore if a chap is no good at games he ought to back up the Games Fund by backing up Grubber. I back up Grubber"—a deep sigh here—"but you slang me!"

"Oh!" snapped Vipont. "So that's what you mean by the Cause?"

"I knew a brainy person like you would see it."

Vipont reflected a moment. Then his wrath kindled. "What do you mean," he roared, "by telling those desolate urchins that they can keep themselves fit without proper training?"

"There you go again. Your epithets, Vipont! Why should kids be more desolate than you Sixth people? What did I mean by it? I meant what I told them. Kids can keep in condition without knocking off pudding."

"Oh, you're a judge," Vipont sneered.

"Perhaps I am," said the Magnum.

The great man looked him over and over; his steely eyes glittered. "I've got it!" he cried. "I'll get your fat down, you hound! By James, I'll make you run in the Senior Paperchase, and I'll make you train for it—you see if I don't! You shall train and train. You're a judge, are you! I'll show you! I'll sweat you down to a skeleton. And you mark this: if you come in last in the chase I'll flay you."

Then most suddenly over that mask-like face broke its smile, and grew and grew, while Vipont could only gape.

"And supposing, Vipont, I come in first?"

"Supposing WHAT?"

"Supposing I come in first, Vipont?"

"Come in first! *You* come in first! Listen to me. If you come in first I'll stand you a prize!"

"What prize?" asked the Magnum, in dubious tones.

"If you come in first we'll advance the Cause. I'll stand you free grub for the rest of the term in Grubber. Ha, ha, ha! That's riveting! *You* come in first!"

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"SUPPOSING I COME IN FIRST, VIPONT?"

And the great man leaned back in his chair and laughed uproariously.

When he had finished, his visitor said: "You're not serious?"

"What! about my offer if you come in first? I'll stand you as much as you can eat for the rest of the term, man!"

"No—about making me train and go in for the beastly thing?"

"I am serious. Dead serious. As you'll find out. You'll run in our paperchase or I'll break you to bits."

"I shouldn't break. I'm too soft to break," purred the Magnum.

"Then I'll pound you to bits."

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"But, Vipont, I say, I can't run."

The expert drew himself up with tremendous importance. "Fat whale," he rejoined, "you *can* run. Everybody can run. Perhaps he can't run fast, perhaps he can't run far; but everybody can *run*. You take that from me."

The Magnum's smile just began but died out at once. "Very well," he said stonily. "If you insist."

"And another thing," cried Vipont, raising one finger. "Mark this! You won't tell anyone what I've promised you; in fact, you won't tell a single soul that *I* made you enter. If it gets out that I made you, I shall know that you've blabbed." He added a second to the first warning digit. "And I'll find plenty of ways of making you sorry you blabbed."

"Yes, I'm sure you would," sighed the Magnum—"I'm sure you would, Vipont."

II

WHEN his friends perceived their Magnum in shoes and shorts they danced around him with a great and exceeding delight. "Hullo, Sprottie, what's the idea? Are you training for the paperchase? Noble old egg!"

"Yes," said the Magnum, releasing his smile, "I am."

"But why?" they entreated.

"Do you want to know—really?" he asked them, dropping his voice.

"Of course we want to know!"

He dropped his voice more intimately still. "You swear you won't tell?"

They nodded excitedly.

"Good. Then I'll tell you. It's for the good of the Cause."

More in the dark than ever they echoed: "What cause?"

"*The Cause*," said the Magnum, in rather a hollow tone.

They told him that it must be a rotten cause which couldn't raise a better champion than him. They demonstrated in detail that *he* couldn't run.

In the manner of one who is searching his memory he retorted that that was exactly where they were wrong: everybody could run. Perhaps they couldn't run fast; perhaps they couldn't run far; but everybody could run, he insisted gloomily.

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He stripped his sweater and explained, with a bit of an air, that presently he was "having a spin with old Vipont."

And here, striding round the track, loomed that big man himself ! Emaciated kids darted all ways in terror, and the faces of the others grew long as fiddles. What a splendid action was Vipont's ! How superbly he moved ! Surely they should not have watched with such dismal faces ? But great, we are told, is the Truth, and it will prevail ; and the truth is that very few wanted Vipont to win.

He was too cocksure—he swanked too much : that's what they said of him. Keating and Watson, the hares, said much more than that. They said that they were fed to the eyes with his bragging that this year he'd show how hares could be caught—for a change. They said that it was a jolly mercy, by Jingo, that the paperchase never followed the same prescribed route. If it had done, they groaned, he would catch them for certain ; but as it was—oh, they wished they might lay false scents.

Their sympathisers agreed. Yes, beastly bad luck that it wasn't allowed deliberately to lay false scents.

But, Keating and Watson reminded them, clutching at straws, there was one small mercy. They *were* allowed to use their wits. If they could diddle hounds without laying false scents, that was all in the game—now wasn't it, people ?

Yes, that was in the game. That was perfectly legitimate. So long as hares laid a true scent they could try dodges and turn anything they might come across to advantage. But they hadn't the earthliest chance of diddling the pack. "Never, with Vipont leading them !" was the verdict.

The worried pair agreed that the verdict was right. "But wouldn't we like to," they groaned. "The shark's after our blood money." Well, whether he earned that "blood money," as they called it, or not, he would lift the cup for a cert. Nobody could doubt that. He said so himself.

Hammond ? One or two brightened slightly when Hammond was mentioned. Second last year, and come on tremendously since.

"Ham, old diehard," that quiet man was implored, "beat Vipont and we'll shove up a statue to you."

The Junior Paperchase came a few days before, and for this the kids must get busy tearing up paper. That Sprott of the Fourth had to join their ranks at the job was the consequence of his little remark

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about vipers. It was not forgotten by the man whose name he had twisted.

"Here, Porpoise," called he, being in charge, "fall in with this squad."

And that was that. His victim sighed, and fell in.

But Vipont, having started them, strolled out of the room. Whereupon the victim gave Palfry Minor his smile and pushed his quota of newspaper towards that bright being, who pounced on it and scooped it all on his own pile.

"Rather, Sprott!" he piped proudly. "I'll tear it for you."

So the Magnum regaled himself as his manner was. Alas! a step sounded. Here came their slave-driver back. Did he catch any single one of them idling his time?

He did not; for ere he was well through the doorway, the Magnum had snatched some letters out of his pocket and was rending them into pieces for all he was worth.

"That's the style, Fatty!" laughed Vipont. "Tear away, Fat Man!"

"Viper!" responded the Magnum, under his breath.

III

WHAT a scrum at the gates to see the chase start! And dodging here and there around people's legs were twenty-one fellow-sufferers whose chase had been run, whose training deprivations were over and done with.

"And none of us did any good," they bubbled resentfully.

"I couldn't raise a gallop," moaned Stockport. "How could I!"

"And I," grieved another, "was trained bang away to nothing."

"I wish old Vipont couldn't raise a gallop to-day!"

Twenty faint voices concurred with reviving fervour.

"I say! Look at poor old Sprottie!"

All heads swung round towards their Magnum. Alas! what a change in him! How his cheeks hung: gone their rosy roundness and bloom. His body could still be drawn by describing a circle, but where was its cheery firmness?—oh, where indeed? A more doleful figure never awaited the signal, modestly in the very last row of all.

There towered the back of Vipont's head in the front line. Vipont had no eyes in the back of his head.

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Did the Magnum's hand steal to his pocket and rise to his mouth? Did his cheeks fill out and stretch? Did his sad face light up?

"Have some?" he suggested, nudging his neighbour.

"I say, Magnum," exclaimed the latter, "you're surely not stodging now!"

"Cream horns," the Magnum whispered, "are jolly good training fodder." A rapt, beatific expression caressed his wan features.

The pistol cracked. They were off, Vipont leading at once. Striding away . . . oh, glorious . . . how his thoughts chanted! What a splendiferous day for beating all records—with just enough nip in the air. Yes, he'd set his own pace and soon leave this rabble behind. The pot his for keeps!

Not a silly ass could get near him but Hammond. Hammond! Pah! He wasn't afraid of Hammond.

Right liberally the scent was strewing the high road as he swung along with his tireless seven-league stride. It would, he was thinking, have been a bit of a rag to have lagged behind and prodded on Fat Man Sprott. By James, yes! If this hadn't been a serious affair he'd have stuck behind and prodded Sprott on all the way with a toasting fork or something. Gosh! What good sport!

On Vipont swung, revolving many things in his mind, as his old friend the Pious Æneas had done before him. But what he most began to revolve when they'd done two good miles was the disconcerting proximity still of Hammond. Hadn't he, Vipont himself, made the pace a real cracker? Yet, there was Hammond only a few yards behind him. Padding on just behind him. No signs of flurry. Padding along with the most composed air in the world. Confounded cheek of Hammond! Let's shake him off.

So, crossing the stile to the meadows where the scent streamed, Vipont lengthened his stride and breasted the rise. This was where he'd shake Hammond off all right, for no one could take a hill at a pace like his.

On the top of the rise he turned his head to glance back, and was satisfied that he had increased his lead. Before him stretched the borders of Uckenham Forest, where he found the scent at once in a narrow glade, and nursed himself as he followed it down the bridle-path. Easy going, this, which he could afford to take easier, for that hill would have left friend Hammond with bellows to mend.

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Stay! Whose were those padding footfalls brushing the glade? Confound it all! They were Hammond's. This wouldn't do.

His pace faltered; almost flagged; it dropped yard by yard, and yard by yard the pursuer was overhauling him. Yes, Hammond had drawn up; they ran shoulder to shoulder; nor was there over-much room on the path for two. Shoulder to shoulder; and next, Hammond's shoulders in front; and next, as much as one full stride's distance between them. But Vipont, the one behind, had shot his foot forward, and his right toe very sharply struck Hammond's heel.

"I say, old man! I'm sorry. I say! Did I touch you?"

For Hammond had uttered a cry of pain and was tottering.

The deepest concern was stamped upon Vipont's face. "You don't mean to say—I spiked you—old man?" he ejaculated.

The lame man, whose heel was bleeding, limped a few yards. "All right," he gasped. "You couldn't help it, I know. I shouldn't have tried to pass here; there's not enough room."

"There isn't much," agreed Vipont in dismal tones. "I was spurting—I say, old man—I'm awfully sorry."

"It's no good you waiting," groaned Hammond. "You push on. I'm done. Some of the others will be coming along any moment."

"I say! I am sorry. I'm frightfully sorry, old man. You're sure you don't mind if I get on? You're sure you're all right?"

"Yes," Hammond said curtly, binding his heel with his handkerchief.

The great man ere he went moaned, "I'll never forgive myself, Ham." The strategist, when he was well on his way again, smiled.

The delay had cost him some of his comfortable lead; but he reflected that he could run away from the rest as and when he liked, leaving them to fight for the empty honours of second and third place. Swing along then! Oh, glorious! After the scent, as it left the forest now and littered this farmyard.

"The silly asses haven't spared it," he sneered. "They can't be far ahead either. We'll bustle along for that money."

Through the farmyard and into the old Roman road, which lay before him like a broad piece of ribbon; on its right the spacious meadows dipping to Frampton. The scent seemed to peter out here . . . no . . . here it was still . . . scantier, but leading straight to the viaduct.

Ha! That's what the hares were up to! They had drawn in the

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scent for a few yards and then been sparse with it, and sneaked through the viaduct tunnel, which would bring them out on the skirts of Little Mich Wood. They would make their turn by the stream for home. They had thought to check the hounds, had they, by holding the scent up! Silly fools!

Well, let's see if this trail did carry on to the tunnel. Yes, here it was, by James, right into the mouth of the tunnel. But nothing like the litter they had strewed in the farmyard. No, of course not. They had thinned it out almost unfairly—yes, almost unfairly. He'd have something to say about that when he'd caught them, in spite of it.

Well, not a second to lose if he wanted to make sure of catching them.

"Silly asses!" he sneered again, when he'd pressed through the tunnel and found the scent again at the other end. "Silly asses! To think that they could check *me*!"

Behind him sounded the hollow rumble of feet as the eager field followed its leader into the tunnel.

IV

THE Magnum was not enjoying himself in the least. It is true that he had not expected to enjoy himself, but this was worse than anything he had imagined. Hopelessly behind, almost out of sight, he deliberated why ever he should swot on? The sausage rolls, which he'd brought to keep up his strength, had lasted no time, nor had his acid drops. What was there to plod on for? Nothing at all!

Well, there was nobody to see him. He could drop out now and make his way by the shortest cut back to Grubber. Besides, what an idiot he'd be to attempt to finish! If he finished he'd be last man home for a cert, and if he was last man home, why, Viper would flay him! "But I can't be *last* man home," he told himself, "if I don't finish. If I don't finish I'll be *first* man home. Won't I, now?"

He toyed with this idea. It sounded all right. So far as he could make out, then, if he *didn't* finish, Viper would have to stand him grub for the rest of the term!

"Splendid!" puffed the Magnum, about to throw up.

But half a minute—what else had that sneering beast said? He'd said that he was too fat *ever* to finish. "Fat Man," he had jeered, "you will never finish!"

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Oh, had he !

"Struggle on !" panted the Magnum.

"Yes, but—consider this, man. If you finish, you're flayed. For you can only finish last ; *you'll be flayed if you finish !*"

"This," the Magnum answered himself, "is the rummest set-out.

It seems the only way I can save my skin is to chuck it ! But hang Viper and his flaying. I'm going on."

He knew very well that he never would have gone on if his tormentor had not jeered at and taunted him so.

"Toddle on, old fellow," gasped the spent Magnum.

Phew ! This is awful work. He'd been at it for hours and hours—it must be hours and hours ; his tongue felt all shrivelled..

"TEAS SUPPLIED TO CYCLISTS." Ah ! entrancing legend ! Ah, the forethought that had slipped a two-bottle piece in his pocket ! "Have you," panted the Magnum, popping his head in the cottage, "have you—such a—thing as—



35 Drost

"HAVE YOU—SUCH A—THING AS—A BOTTLE—OF—GINGER BEER ?"

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a bottle—of—ginger beer?" They replied that they had plenty of ginger beer.

"The large size?" he gasped.

"Yes, the Magnum size," they assured him.

"I'll swig one now, and take two with me," he managed.

All the swank runners run with corks in their hands. "These bottles," said he to himself, "will be sort of corks."

A bottle in either hand, he returned to the chase.

Refreshed, although his shins were aching, he carried on at a steady resolute wobble, and eventually, somehow or other, arrived at a farmyard where the scent was littered before him in liberal profusion. And farther on it carried on, if more patchily, straight to that tunnel. "I think," said he, "that I deserve a swig now."

So the Magnum squatted down by the mouth of the tunnel, and tipping up the bottle, took a good draught. The stopper, as he was replacing it, slipped from his fingers and rolled down the bank towards a little patch of scent, into which it nestled as though it would hide. Stooping down to recover it, he exclaimed.

He exclaimed again. It was hard to believe his eyes. These scraps of torn paper amid which the stopper had rolled were bits—oh, it couldn't be—of letters from home! Yes, there was half of his home address on that tiny scrap! And oughtn't he to know his own father's writing!

"Now that," mused the Magnum, "is rum. That's amazingly rum! These are bits of the letters I tore up for the kids' chase!"

Bewildering, truly. Now, how had this happened, he pondered? And then he saw it all. This scent must have been lying here since last week, and the hares had taken advantage of it, by Jove! They had used their wits, as they were entitled to do. *Their scent did not go through the tunnel at all.*

"Then where is it?" puzzled the Magnum. "I must quest back. What a bigger ass I'd have looked if I'd followed this stale scent!"

Back he plodded; back down the old Roman road beside the spacious meadows dipping to Frampton. A tall thick hedge divided two of these meadows. He wondered if Keating and Watson had turned sharp right there and dropped their scent in the ditch, perhaps, beneath that tall hedge. He wondered if they were making that way for Frampton?

"Well, no good debating," he panted. "Let's have a squint!"

FOR THE GOOD OF THE CAUSE

Good ! Here *was* the scent ! Any amount of it, close under the hedge.

"They jolly nearly diddled me," puffed the Magnum. "Oh, I wish they'd diddled Viper. But I know they haven't."

As he toddled on his lonely way up the meadows he began to reckon with singular resignation by how many days or weeks he'd be last man home.

V

WHAT a scrum at the gates to see the chase come sprinting home !—a scrum which was growing impatient and very amazed, for there wasn't any sign of anyone yet. The hares had been back ages, and so had Hammond.

With his wounded heel bandaged and dressed, Hammond was waiting on one side with Keating and Watson, who appeared to be telling him something amusing. From the look on his face it must have been very amusing. Pressed to reveal it, Keating and Watson grinned happily.

"By the viaduct," said they, "we sold Vipont a pup. By a rare stroke of luck we found some of the kids' scent up there, so we turned off sharp under those tall hedges towards Frampton ! That's why Vipont's so long. Bet he plugged straight on through the tunnel."

Palfry Minor, greatly daring, put in his word. "I was a hare in our chase," he remarked gently. "I went right through the tunnel and into Little Mich Wood. I wound round and round in the wood ; round and round. Because you know we mayn't run farther than Little Mich, so I thought I'd give the hounds a nice maze to wind up with."

"Round and round ! Poor old Vipont ! Cheers !" cried the company.

"After going round and round *and* round," beamed Palfry again, "they'd all have to trudge back and find the real scent. What a lark !"

"Still, he must be in any moment now !" Hammond exclaimed.

"But what rotten time though !"

"Oh, appalling ! The worst on record."

"Look out ! Here he comes !"

Round the bend in the road hove the figure of First Man Home. Even at the distance its puffing and blowing came floating to them on the refreshing breeze. Of course it was Vipont, but, remarkable paradox, he looked from here to have put on flesh since he started !

FOR THE GOOD OF THE CAUSE

"Hallos! What's he after now? He's pulled up!"

So he had. The First Man Home had pulled up to take a drink from—a cork! For those things in either hand must be surely his corks? There he was giving whatever it was a sociable pat—fancy Vipont shamming to drink from a cork!

Were those things corks? They looked too big now he was nearer. And—Vipont? Was Vipont as tubby as that?

So the First Man staggered home in a stupefied silence.

He recovered some breath. "Well, I've finished . . . I've finished," he panted. "Anyhow I've finished . . . the beastly course."

This broke the spell. They surrounded him, and patted his shoulders. "Finished, you jolly old image!" they screamed. "You're in FIRST!"

"Silly asses," puffed he. "You're pulling my leg!"

"Magnum, old boy, you've won! There's no one else in!"

He looked at them all, while Palfry danced round with his wraps. He looked by far the most astounded now of the lot.

"Do you mean to tell me," he puffed, "that Viper *was* diddled!"

"Vipont and every man Jack of them except you!"

"And I—and I—" he jerked—"win?"

They assured him that he had won: that he'd beaten Vipont.

Bit by bit his famous smile flooded his face.

"And *he* made me enter," he breathed in a pensive rapture.

Somebody cried, "Here's Vipont. Quick! Hide old Sprottie!"

So behind them they concealed that redundant presence—rather a business, for it took a bit of concealing—and in raced the great man, striding, throwing his head back. The time might be bad, he was thinking, but that wasn't his fault. The field straggled well behind him—so what did the time matter?

For the pot was his own! Gallop in!

Magnificently indeed Vipont galloped in—raking in with that seven-league stride—oh, moving majestically! And so little blown that directly he clapped eyes on Keating he could chip him over the ruse. He'd let them all see that he bore Keating no malice.

"Ha, ha, Keating! You tricked us. Sound fellow, Keating! Hallos, Hammond, poor old warrior! How is the heel?"

"All right, thanks," said Hammond, with a cold stare.

"Jove! I've had a fine spin. Any others in sight? Who'll be runners up, do you think? Who'll be second and third?"

FOR THE GOOD OF THE CAUSE

- "Bet you anything, Vipont, that I can name the second!"
- "Rot, Keating. Bet you can't. They're not even in sight yet."
- "All the same, I bet I can tell you the second!"
- The great man laughed. "Right-oh! Who will it be?"
- "It won't be anyone. It *is* someone, Vipont. It's you."

VI

THE term was drawing gratefully to its close. Beside the counter in Grubber one took his ease whose figure any duffer could draw well enough. Before him stood a plate which had just been heaped by a lank and steely-eyed person who had not tarried.

"Oh, Magnum," rose the chorus, "do tell us one thing?"

The figure at the counter took his heaped plate, and "Help yourselves," said he, as he passed it round. He then released the stoppers of two lordly bottles and poured their contents into a cup of chased silver. "Have a swig," quoth he. "It's jolly good tipple."

They drank. They returned to him the cup of chased silver. "Do tell us!" they begged.

"Tell you what?" he conceded, releasing his smile.

"Why," they entreated, "is Vipont always standing you grub?"

"Why is Viper always standing me grub?"

"Oh, don't be so tantalising, Magnum. Why does he?"

"He stands me," the Magnum sighed, "for the good of the Cause."

"The cause! What cause?"

"*The Cause*," quoth the Magnum serenely.

And nobody has ever got more than that out of him.



The "DAINTY COWSLIP"
set sail with a crew
of six —



which was reduced
to five —



four —

three —



and
two—



and the course
was
completed—



by ONE !



—Bethell Jones—



Indian Totem Poles

By PERCY DENT

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS DRAWN FROM PHOTOGRAPHS SUPPLIED BY
THE AUTHOR

FINDING myself in Vancouver some years ago, and at a time when things were rather stagnant with me, I decided to while away a few dull weeks cruising along the Pacific Coast in the direction of Alaska, stepping off at the ports *en route* to see the totem poles in some of the native villages. I had never seen a totem, and knew practically nothing about them.

Vancouver is not famous for periods of hot, dry weather—they are, in fact, of rare occurrence there—but at the time of which I am speaking, a heat-wave of great intensity had struck the city, and everything and everybody seemed to have reached boiling-point. Perhaps the stifling weather had something to do with my determination to seek the shade of Alaska.

I booked a passage on the *Princess May*, one of the small steamers that ply regularly between Vancouver and Skaguay; and the boat not sailing till midnight, I retired to my cabin pretty early in the evening, dead tired after several days' roaming through the Rockies.

I was a first-class passenger—nearly everyone is on the Skaguay boats, because there are only two classes, first and steerage—and on looking out of the porthole at the sound of the first gong next morning, I saw that we were well clear of Vancouver Island and were heading for the little islands that are dotted between Queen Charlotte and the mainland.

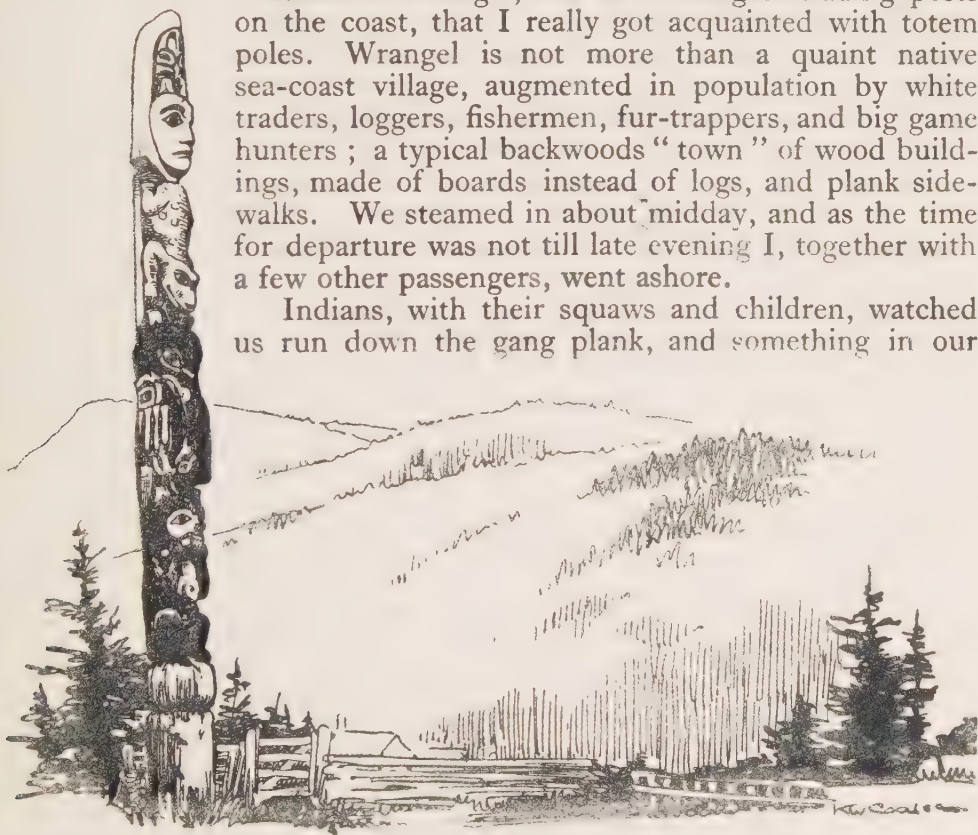
INDIAN TOTEM POLES

From Vancouver—the Canadian base for the upper country—to Skaguay (South-East Alaska) is a voyage of a thousand miles, the course lying between the mainland and innumerable thickly-wooded, picturesque islands. The scenery along this coast is some of the finest in the world—an ever-changing panorama of hills clothed with extensive pine forests, backed by a range of peaks, huge, rocky, and snow-capped ; and all the way along, at intervals, glaciers glitter in the sun, and cascades leap into the sea.

Our boat called in at several ports which, apart from their importance as trading stations, are also famous for their Indian curios ; but not all of these Indian settlements enjoy the distinction of being totem villages.

It was at Wrangel, one of the largest trading posts on the coast, that I really got acquainted with totem poles. Wrangel is not more than a quaint native sea-coast village, augmented in population by white traders, loggers, fishermen, fur-trappers, and big game hunters ; a typical backwoods "town" of wood buildings, made of boards instead of logs, and plank sidewalks. We steamed in about midday, and as the time for departure was not till late evening I, together with a few other passengers, went ashore.

Indians, with their squaws and children, watched us run down the gang plank, and something in our



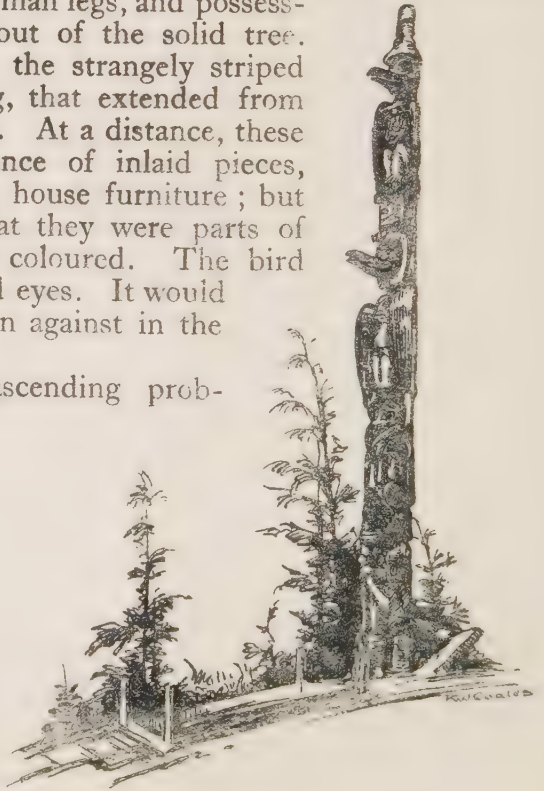
INDIAN TOTEM POLES

general appearance afforded them immense amusement, which, however, they had the good manners to suppress, merely venting their gaiety in giggles from the squaws, and frequent nods and stone-wall smiles from the men. One of the party raised his hat with an elaborate movement of his arm, which set the squaws off into fits of laughter, but only succeeded in drawing a few grunts from the men.

Very soon I found what I was looking for—a totem pole; and I must say that even if the voyage had been lacking in interest, the sight of this symbol of lost native art would have been ample reward for the journey.

Originally a huge spruce tree 60 or 80 feet high, it stood perpendicularly as though it were still growing. From top to bottom it presented a mass of carving that must have been a colossal task to the man or men who did the work. At the base was carved a freakish eagle, supported by a pair of human legs, and possessing an ornamental body cut out of the solid tree. The body was remarkable for the strangely striped incisions, probably 5 feet long, that extended from the eagle's shoulder to its hips. At a distance, these striped cuts had the appearance of inlaid pieces, similar to those seen in costly house furniture; but on closer inspection I saw that they were parts of the same tree but differently coloured. The bird boasted a huge beak and dilated eyes. It would not be a pleasant object to run against in the gloom of falling night.

Immediately above and ascending probably 20 feet were a series of human heads, some of them distinctly attractive and resembling the armoured knights of the Middle Ages; others were rather vicious-looking captains of outlawry of a particularly wild aspect. Some were alarming facial images of no known species of human or animal kind, bearing



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monster mouths and heavy jaws which gave them truly terrifying expressions.

Another pole bore beautiful and cleverly carved representations of a combination of man, beast, and fowl, with protruding tongues, prominent beaks, and carvings of semi-oriental design, as fantastic as unreal, but showing an artistic conception and a natural skill that was really wonderful.

But this totem was singularly unlike the other in construction. It did not consist of a single tree trunk. Apparently the Indian craftsman had lopped down a big spruce tree, cut off 10 feet of the butt end, and stuck it in the ground so that 4 feet protruded above the surface. Upon this stump he had proceeded to build a totem pole. First came the carved wooden image of a bear-like animal, 5 feet high, securely fastened by intricate mortising to the spruce stump; upon the head of this beast was erected in similar fashion a 6-foot carving of a mythical fowl, made of black wood, with inlaid-like gills or beak and eyes of white wood, probably coloured white; and adhering to its body in upside-down position were miniature carvings of the same fowl, identical in every respect to the parent fowl; and so the totem was built up to a height of quite 80 feet from the ground.

Outside one native cabin a huge bear, three or four times the size of a man, fashioned out of a solid trunk of a tree, with legs, claws, tail, and ears complete, stood or crouched, its big mouth open a little, revealing two sets—top and bottom—of perfectly shaped teeth. Apparently it had stood for many decades, and was in as good a state of preservation as could be expected considering its exposed situation.

There was no plan or method in the placing of the poles; they dotted the town of Wrangel like telegraph poles stuck in the ground at haphazard. In every direction I could see totem poles, derelict spires of a dying, but no doubt at one time very vigorous, religious system.

I approached an Indian and tried to get more definite information regarding totems. His knowledge of English was limited.

"You, Jock, what for these totem?" I asked.

"Long time gone."

"Him heap god?" I persisted, pointing to a pole near by.

He shook his head. "God long time gone," he repeated. "Him heap god," and he stopped and ticked off the fingers on his left hand

"You no pray totem pole no more?"

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"Sometime—long time gone."

As that appeared to be the extent of his knowledge concerning the images—though possibly his ignorance was assumed—I passed on to another Red man. But all my questions were answered in much the same way, the natives showing a disinclination to speak about the totems which was very annoying, especially as I was searching for first-hand information.

However, before the trip was over, I gathered from one source or another enough to satisfy me as to the origin of the poles. The tribes inhabiting the Pacific Coast are direct descendants of the Athabascan stock, and invariably selected a wild animal as the source from which came all their power, luck, or misfortune. The Black Bear Indians considered the bears of that colour their prehistoric ancestors ; consequently that animal was not molested by any of the tribe. The black bear became a sort of god to them ; and those natives skilled in the art were set to work cutting out of trees carved images of that animal, which were stuck up on tree stumps as shrines before which the men of the tribe prostrated themselves.

Now it might be asked why, if the Black Bear tribe accepted the bear as their totem, they allowed the figures of other beasts and birds to have a place by the side of the bear god ? Well, there existed certain domestic rites which sanctioned the marriage of members of one tribe with those of another. An Indian of the Black Bear community who

married a daughter of the Wolf tribe was allowed to accept a carved wooden wolf and attach it to the totem of his own tribe. The result was that some Indians, who married at intervals squaws from several other tribes, had before their wigwams totem poles 80 feet high, bearing replicas of the many gods worshipped by their respective wives. And so I found totems exhibiting carved foxes,



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bears, wolves, lynxes, eagles, and semi-animal ghost men, all carved into or attached to one pole.

The totemic laws were observed with the utmost severity, and those unfortunate members who broke them suffered the extreme penalty, which was death in some form or other.

I saw many totems, and all were carved in similar design, giving the impression that they were all the work of one craftsman.

The natives of the Pacific Coast are made up of the relics of many wandering tribes, all of which had at one time their special totem. They carved them on their spear heads and the handles of hunting-knives and wooden clubs, and many a thrilling tale was told to me of the atrocities committed in early days by the ancestors of those very Indians.

Having satisfied my curiosity as far as I could, I strolled through the town. Walking rather gingerly along sidewalks built of not too stout boards, in some places as high as 6 feet from the ground, I was interested in the tiny carved curios displayed by native dealers, chiefly half-breeds. Apparently every known species of life, from man to insect, was carved in miniature, in sizes ranging from half an inch to 6 feet in length, and proportionately broad. But the dealers were poor salesmen, and if I had not insisted on several purchases I should never have got them.

"Do you think these totems have still a religious significance?" I asked of an American tourist who had come ashore with me.

"Oh yes, but not nearly so powerful as it was a few generations



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ago. Now the Indians are subdued by the white man, and they naturally have less belief in the totem's power to protect."

"Why I asked was because the two Indians who passed a moment ago didn't pay the slightest attention to the poles. In fact, I thought I detected a grin of contempt on the face of one of them."

"The grin of contempt was probably directed to ourselves, for the Indian still believes that the totems possess a slumbering power that may one day wake up and restore their old-time sway over the land stolen from them by the white man."

"What would happen if we were to get an axe and chop this totem pole down?"

"Nothing—that is, in the daylight."

"How do you mean?"

"Why, you would perhaps get knocked on the head some dark night, and when the authorities discovered that you were missing, the Red-

skins would say that you were last seen 'Shooting the Rapids—canoe smash up—him no more.'"

We left Wrangle in the evening. The natives did not give us an enthusiastic send-off. The men stood about the landing-stage silent and sullen, giving voice to occasional "clicks," of which their language is largely made up, the squaws sheepishly standing at a greater distance, as if afraid or embarrassed. As the boat drew away, the totem poles could be seen for several miles out, puncturing the sky, rather depressing objects against a background of dark spruce-draped mountains.



ON THE OVERDUE LIST



LAWRENCE · R · BOURNE

I

“’**T**IS won’erful what eddication can do for folks as is lucky enough to have it—proper eddication I mean,” observed Sam Trevassick, as he sat at the tiller of the *Kittiwake* and stared out to sea.

His mate, Jim Howell, nodded approval. “That’s so, skipper. I went to a Board School and learned to read and write after a fashion——”

“After a fashion so you did,” interrupted Sam; “so bad as how the young gel you’re a-courtin’ can’t tell whether you’re sending her kisses or tryin’ to sign your name. But what I was goin’ to say, sir”—and he turned to the only other member of the boat’s crew, a lad of seventeen, who was leaning back in an easy posture against the gunwale—“what I was goin’ to say is that it’s won’erful how a young fellow like yourself picks up sea-going charts an’ navigation, an’ such, sort o’ natural like, as a fish takes to water; whereas Jim ’ere might be puzzling his head over ’em for a month o’ Sundays, an’ not know any more about ’em at the finish than he did at the start.”

The skipper looked at his mate as though he anticipated some sort of reply to this challenge, but as none was forthcoming, he remarked oracularly, “It’s a instinct.”

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"Ay," agreed Jim, taking refuge in the word, "that's what it is—instinct."

Leonard Burton, the fortunate possessor of this useful quality of mind, smiled good-humouredly. "Oh, I don't know," he said meditatively. "Of course, I should have liked to go to sea properly, but my father thinks I should be throwing away all my chances in life if I didn't follow his business of underwriter; so I'm going to have a shot at the next best thing, and get a master's certificate as soon as I can. That will only allow me to sign as master on a vessel of my own, but it's better than nothing. I'm afraid you'll think it swank, but a good many yachting men get a fore-and-aft ticket of that kind. The training for the exam. is useful, of course."

"Ay, I've no doubt so it is," said Sam, "though it 'ud be quite over the head of a chap like Jim 'ere. True it is, you can't learn too much about the sea, an' when you get eddication an' practical experience in tow, you can't be going wrong."

"I suppose the examination be tidy stiff, sir?" asked Jim.

"Nearly as bad as getting a real captain's ticket," replied Leonard; "but it's jolly interesting."

"Ay, I make no manner o' doubt it is," said the skipper. "An' when you get that, an' the nice little craft Benson's are building for your father, you'll feel like a proper seaman, eh?"

"Well, I don't know about that; but it will be a bit of compensation for having to stick about in a London office most of my time. But this is pretty slow work," he added, not sorry to turn the conversation away from his personal affairs. "Wish a bit of a breeze would come along."

"Looks like we're in for a night of it," growled Sam, "an' the tide's setting us out a goodish bit. Hope it don't come on fog like."

The *Kittiwake*—a sturdy yawl-rigged fishing-craft, some thirty feet over all, decked in for'ard to make a small cabin but otherwise open—was to the south of the Lizard. Leonard, commencing a summer holiday at one of his favourite West-country haunts, had renewed an old acquaintance with Sam—the two had often been afloat together since the time when Leonard was a small boy in sailor suits—and had eagerly accepted the skipper's invitation to a fishing trip to a spot he had a fancy for; and now, with a fine assortment of line-caught fish, they were making their way back to Penzance. The breeze had failed, and, having no motor, they were drifting with the



With a splintering crash, the stem cut through her side

ON THE OVERDUE LIST

tide some two or three miles off shore. It was nearing sunset, and Leonard thought he detected a note of anxiety in Sam's voice when he hinted at fog.

A little later Jim exclaimed, "Fog it is, skipper. The Lizard's gone now."

"Ay, so I sees. Well, maybe it'll blow over. Better get that old frying-pan and a thole pin handy ready to make a clatter. Bit too much traffic hereabouts for my liking in a fog; an' some o' them there tramps what has to save their tide or the skipper gets the sack ain't none too partic'lar—don't slow down like, 'cordin' to regulations."

The mist thickened with the dusk, and round them the stillness of the night was broken by the sirens of passing steamers. Jim rattled away merrily with the thole pin on the frying-pan.

"It gets cold out here in the fog," said Leonard presently. "I'm mighty glad I took your tip and put on this blue guernsey."

"Have a go with the jazz band, sir—it'll help to warm 'ee."

Nothing loath, Leonard relieved Jim with the frying-pan, and the mate proceeded to cut up some twist and fill a stubby clay pipe.

"Rattle in good an' hearty," said Sam a little later. "That bloke's getting too near for comfort."

A deafening bellow from a siren close at hand cut short his remarks; a minute later the wash of a steamer was heard, and a soaring black shape seemed to condense out of the fog broad on their port bow.

"Look out—she's atop of us! Jump clear!"

The bow wave of the steamer swung the little craft on her beam, and with a splintering crash the stem cut through her side.

Leonard found himself grasping wildly at a rope, which slid through his hand; then he was rolled over by the broken water. He bumped against the ship's side, and felt himself going under, when his hand again came in contact with the rope. This time he held on firmly, and was towed through the water by the vessel, which was now slowing down.

Without loosening his hold on the rope, he managed to get his breath, and feeling the steamer's side with his feet, he tried to climb up. Then he felt that the rope was being hauled in, so he contented himself with maintaining his grip on it. Bumped and scraped against the metal plates, he came at length to the level of the bridge deck. Here a strong hand was reached out to help him; he grasped the rail and drew himself aboard.

ON THE OVERDUE LIST

"Where are the others?" he cried, when he had recovered his breath.

"Gone under, my lad," said a seaman. "Reckon you'd have gone an' all if Johnson here hadn't fancied to heave this bit of line down."

"Thought I saw your white face in the wash, an' chanced it," remarked Johnson.

"But there were two others in the boat—aren't you trying to help them?" exclaimed Leonard; and the reply came from the bridge:

"Full speed ahead, I tell you, Mister. It wasn't a boat—it was wreckage. Full ahead, now."

"We've hit a fishing-boat, sir," said an officer in a gruff voice, "and we ought to look for survivors."

"Well, what if we did? They'd no lights or we should have seen them. We can't look about for survivors in this weather."

"There's one of 'em here, sir," shouted the man who had first helped Leonard aboard, and who proved to be the second mate; "a young fisher chap."

Leonard rushed to the foot of the bridge steps. "Put out a boat for Heaven's sake, Captain—there were two men with me."

In the darkness the captain's face could not be seen, but, judging by his voice, it must have displayed symptoms of apoplexy on hearing this request.

"How did you get aboard, you—you——"

"Caught a line thrown to me," replied Leonard. "But won't you look for the others? It's murder to leave them like this."

Like a shot the captain sprang down from the bridge, and glared into the boy's face, dimly illumined by a light from the chart-house.

"Pity you didn't go with them, you young longshore loafer. You've come aboard my ship without being invited; get for'ard out of my sight, and don't fancy you're going to loaf here. You'll work your passage, and I'll dump you ashore first port of call."

Johnson and the second mate had discreetly disappeared.

Leonard, shivering with cold from his immersion and the shock of the disaster, went slowly down the ladder to the fore well-deck; but before he reached the fo'c'sle he heard the captain and the officer with the gruff voice—evidently the mate—disputing again, and he returned up the ladder to listen, hoping against hope that something might yet be done for his companions.

ON THE OVERDUE LIST

"I'll log you for mutiny—I'll sign you off 'decline to report,'" yelled the captain in a fury.

"Don't care a rap what you do. It's a dirty business, and I'm going to clear myself of it. I shall report it when we touch at Gib."

"Report it, will you! And who'd take your word against mine, you broken-down scallywag? I only got you shipped out of charity. Nobody'd look at you since you lost the *Melcombe*. I'll just tell the Consul you were drunk again."

"You blackguard! You signed me on because you wanted me—and I'd like to know what for. Anyhow, you've gone too far now: that lad there'll be evidence enough against you."

II

ALL hope of doing anything for the missing men was gone; and as no purpose was to be served by playing eavesdropper, Leonard slowly returned towards the fo'c'sle door.

He was no stranger to the ways of ships, and knew that the accommodation would be rough, and the companionship probably rougher. Still, it was something to be alive and uninjured, whereas Sam and Jim—

He pushed open an iron door and entered the fo'c'sle, where the light was dim and the atmosphere smelly. Two men were seated at a rough table, while a third snored heavily from a lower bunk.

"Come in, me lad," cried one of the men. "Better get them wet duds off yer, and turn in." He pointed with the stem of his pipe. "That one's spare."

Leonard began to remove his sodden clothes, his teeth chattering with cold.

"'Ere, shove this round yer. 'Tain't much to look at, but it's dry." A coarse flannel shirt, much patched, was passed to him.

"Can't give you a drink 'cause we ain't got none."

Leonard got into the shirt, and, pulling a blanket from a bunk, he wrapped it round him and sat down. He guessed the fo'c'sle hands would expect him to tell his story.

"Thought you was coming right inside this 'ere old sardine tin when you hit her," remarked the owner of the shirt. "Fair made me jump—didn't it you, Joe?"

ON THE OVERDUE LIST

Joe nodded agreement. "So it did; but it don't take much to make you jumpy, Bill."

"Garn! I'm as good as any man aboard, but I had a proper skinful when I shipped yesterday."

"So you 'ad an' all, Bill. Must have touched lucky afore you sailed."

"Always reckon to ship well canned—no work to do till we're well out."

"You'll do it once too often, me lad, an' some first mate'll sober you with his boot toe."

"The bloke in this packet won't, anyhow."

"Don't be too cocksure about him—he can get nasty at odd times. I just heard him yelling at the Old Man."

"Well, the Old Man ain't no good neither, come to that. Seems to me there's a rum crowd on this 'ere ship. Second greaser's like a scared dog, an' we're a job lot here for'ard. Now, young 'un, if you're feeling warm like, cough up your yarn."

Leonard did so, and laid stress on the captain's refusal to look for the missing fishermen.

"Just what I'd reckon him to do—he's a white-livered skunk anyhow," said Bill.

"That's so," assented Joe. "I've got a hunch there's something fishy about this trip. You look out for yourself, young 'un"; and with this, the two seamen turned into their bunks, leaving Leonard to follow at his leisure.

When the watch was changed at eight bells (4 a.m.), he remained where he was, but at the next change the second mate came to the door of the fo'c'sle.

"Hey, you fisherman! Think you're going to lie there all day? You've got to turn to. Hop it, and help the cook in the galley."

Leonard hastened to obey, and dragged on his wet clothes as best he could. A man handed him a mug of strong tea, with the remark, "Stick that in your face."

He drank the tea, and made his way to the galley amidships.

"Peel them spuds," said the "doctor." "Peel 'em properly—don't waste 'em."

Leonard picked up a bucket half full of water, and before he knew what was happening, the cook had slung half a stone of potatoes into it with such force that the water splashed his face and drenched the front of his already sodden clothes.

ON THE OVERDUE LIST

"What fool's trick do you call that?" exploded Leonard, dropping the bucket, the sharp edge of which caught the cook across the instep and, as he was wearing only old carpet slippers, made him dance with pain.

"You did it a-purpose," he roared.

"Well, suppose I did—what then?" Leonard was feeling desperate, but it was not for nothing that he had been runner-up in the Public Schools Heavy-weights, and stepping back quickly, he placed himself on guard. "We're quits now," he added. "Try another trick on me and I'll knock your head off."

"'Twern't a trick," shouted the cook. "'Twere a haccident."

"Same here, doctor. Put some more water in the bucket, and we'll get on with the job."

Finishing the potatoes, he next cleaned some dirty pans at the bidding of the cook, and was then called off to scrub out a cabin. It appeared that he was to be at everyone's beck and call, and word must have gone round that he was to be put on all the most unpleasant jobs that had to be done on board; but the cook, who went about with a limp for the rest of the day, had evidently warned some of the crew that Leonard was "dangerous," and no one lifted a hand against him.



THE COOK HAD SLUNG HALF A STONE OF POTATOES INTO IT.

ON THE OVERDUE LIST

On the second day, however, he fell foul of Captain Derrick, who ran against him in a narrow part of the bridge deck, and ordered him, with an oath, to get out of the way, following it up with a blow on the ear.

Leonard dropped the rags he had been using for brass-polishing. "Don't do that again," he said firmly. "I've not signed on with you, Skipper."

"Captain to you, and say 'sir' when you speak to me."

"Captain be hanged!" retorted Leonard, thoroughly roused. "Master Mariner—and out to lose your ticket."

The captain's hands flew up to strike again, but he thought better of it and dropped them.

"Who do you think you're talking to, Mr. Imitation Fisherman?" he growled. "Who are you to start crowing? I'll have you know I'm captain aboard this ship."

"So you may be," replied Leonard, "and I'm nobody in particular; but I happen to know something about the underwriting business, and I tell you you're risking your ticket."

It was a chance shot, but it was not without effect; with a surly injunction to Leonard to get on with his job, Captain Derrick turned away, muttering.

Feeling that he had narrowly escaped making a fool of himself, Leonard picked up his rags and went on cleaning.

Some time later he became aware of an altercation going on between the captain and Mr. Brand, the first mate. The noises coming from the stokehold and from the badly fitting canvas dodgers on the bridge, which flogged and cracked in the strong breeze, prevented his hearing all that was said—even if he had had any particular desire to do so; but from occasional snatches of talk that came to him, he gathered that the subject of the dispute was a faking of the log and a false entry of the course steered.

"You keep your mouth shut, Mister," the captain wound up, "or I'll sign you off . . . you'll never foot a bridge again."

III

It struck Leonard as curious that Captain Derrick should think it necessary to prow about all over his ship, above and below, as he was in the habit of doing; for although a captain is responsible for

ON THE OVERDUE LIST

everything and everyone aboard, it is not usual for him to make frequent tours of inspection all over his vessel ; he depends on his officers to see that things are ship-shape and to report to him if anything goes wrong. " I suppose he thinks his mates are not much good," was Leonard's inward comment.

They were well across the Bay the following night when a startling occurrence brought to a head the vague suspicions that had been gathering in his mind that there was something decidedly irregular about the voyage. The crew had had a " field day "—a whole day on duty, with no watch below—and when the time came for him to turn in, Leonard was fagged out, and dropped into a sound sleep. About two bells he was awakened by a loud report, and he and the rest of the watch immediately sprang from their bunks.

" All hands—all hands on deck ! " came the captain's voice from the bridge. " All hands—boat stations ! Stand by to lower ! "

This was followed by a loud bellow from the mate, who made a rush for the bridge.

" You scoundrel ! you're trying to scuttle her. Lend a hand, Mr. Evans—he's mad."

In the dim starlight and the gleam of a single electric bulb on the bridge, the crew stood scared into silence, watching the battle that raged on the frail upper bridge. The captain and the mate fought desperately ; the air seemed charged with the sound of their heavy breathing, punctuated with the thudding of blows. Evans, the second mate, rushed in to separate them, but no sooner had he reached the top of the bridge steps than he was knocked backwards, and fell to the deck unconscious and with a broken collar-bone.

The mate had forced the captain backwards from the binnacle to the sidelight. Most of the crew still stood inactive, but the seaman Johnson made a move towards the bridge to pick up the unfortunate second mate, and Leonard followed him. Before they could move him, however, there came a shout, followed by a heavy splash.

" My Scott, they're in the ditch ! "

Leonard sprang to the rail, but could make out nothing in the darkness.

" Can ye see the mad fools ? " asked someone at his elbow, and he turned to find Mr. Munro, the chief engineer, who had just come up from the engine-room. " No ? I suppose not—they're well astern. Where's the second greaser ? "



ONE BOAT HAD DROPPED FROM THE
DAVITS.

"Knocked out," replied Leonard. "We'd better get a boat out."

Some of the crew had already started to swing out a small lifeboat, and others rushed amidships for a similar purpose.

"Look alive, boys—the

blamed old *Penguin* is going down under us."

"The ship's no' sinking," shouted the chief engineer. "That explosion was in the after hatch—no damage."

"There's water in under the foot-plates," came the reply from a stoker.

"Ay, so there may be ; but I've shut the sea-cock, so ye can start the donkey and pitch it out again."

ON THE OVERDUE LIST

Meanwhile, one boat had dropped from the davits, and the crew were struggling to release the hooks.

"Hold on there—hold on," yelled Munro, "or ye'll all be chucked in. Wait till she loses way."

They had sense enough to obey, and when the momentary pause had given them time to think, Leonard hazarded a word of advice. "Row about half a mile astern and see if you can find them, but don't lose our lights."

"Garn, they're blinking well under," said someone, and Leonard recognised the voice as Bill's. Nevertheless, the boat put off, and for a quarter of an hour the crew rowed to and fro, but in a half-hearted manner, putting more energy into their voices than their oars.

"It's waste of time," remarked the engineer. "They've gone to Davy Jones. Run up to the bridge and give the siren a pull."

Leonard did so, and noticing that Johnson was still trying to do something for the second mate, he returned quickly and helped to lift him into the chart-house; then he called the engineer.

"He's no' dead," said Munro, after taking a look at the injured man, "but he's had a fearsome crack an' his collar-bone's gone. My second's done ambulance work—I'll call him."

By the time Mr. Evans was bandaged up and made comfortable the boat had returned, and the men scrambled back aboard.

"Now what are we going to do?" demanded one of them. "Captain an' mate gone—second greaser crocked; where's the bo'sun?"

"Here—what's the matter?" The bo'sun was a quiet, unassuming man, accustomed to doing his job and minding his own business. The men as yet knew little of him.

"You're boss now, aren't you? Well, what about it? Are we going to stick here till we're picked up?"

"I'm bo'sun, not a navigator," came the reply. "Better put her on her course and jog along slow till we meet someone and can borrow a navigator."

"Better wait till daylight," broke in Leonard.

"Hullo, what's up with you?" demanded Joe. "Suddenly woke up?"

"No; but yesterday I heard the mate telling the captain off for being east of his proper course, and we don't want to run on the Spanish coast in the dark. It's a rotten place to get smashed up on."

"He's right," said Mr. Munro shortly; then he asked, "Do ye ken these pairts—have ye been to sea?"

ON THE OVERDUE LIST

"I know the North Spain coast is bad," answered Leonard, "and I know enough about navigation to be able to fix our position and lay a course."

"Gosh, we've shanghaied some blinkin' apprentice!" laughed one of the hands. "Cookie, this bloke you tried it on was an old 'un, eh?"

"If you and the bo'sun agree," said Leonard to Mr. Munro, "I'll try to take her into port."

"I'm willing. Any of ye lads ken mair of brassbounder's work than he does?"

"No," came the decisive answer from two or three.

"Then I'll carry on," said Leonard. "Mr. Munro, I fancy we're badly off our course, and I think we ought to stand by till day-break. What do you say?"

"Sairtainly, Mr.— what's your name?"

"Burton."

"Sairtainly, Mr. Burton. I'll have a look roun'. Steam is ready any moment."

"Thank you, Mr. Munro."

This little ceremonial was not without effect on the crew, and when Leonard next shouted, "Watch below turn in!—Bo'sun, put two men on the look-out and send a hand to the wheel!" his orders were obeyed with good humour.

He mounted the bridge and walked to and fro, staring earnestly to the south'ard in the hope of seeing a warning light; but none showed, and it still wanted an hour to daybreak. Presently Mr. Munro joined him.

"Where are you thinking of making for?"

"Either Gibraltar or home," answered Leonard. "If the cargo's important, perhaps we ought to push on with it."

"Cargo important!" laughed the engineer. "I've just taken a hand-lamp to see what that stick of gelignite did aft, and the after-hold is loaded wi' scrap iron—old bedsteads an' sic' like rubbish."

"But I thought we were bound for Trieste and Levant ports with general cargo?"

"That's so, and perhaps the ship's papers would say so; but I'm beginning to fancy she was no' intended to get that far."

Leonard whistled. "An insurance job, eh? Hope my Guv'nor isn't being caught in it."

ON THE OVERDUE LIST

"The skipper was a pur fool to think he could turn on a sea-cock, and scare us a' oot with a bit of a pop aft."

"It nearly succeeded though," said Leonard. "If poor old Brand hadn't gone for him, we'd have all rushed for the boats."

"Ay, that's so; but I twigged that sea-cock before the explosion took place." Mr. Munro chuckled. "They didna synchronise."

"I'm sorry Mr. Brand's gone—I thought he was quite a decent sort."

"So he was, but he'd had bad luck, and the skipper knew it and drove him nearly aff his head wi' his sarcasms. I wouldna have shipped masel, only I'd been on the beach best pairt of sax months."

A faint pallor had crept into the sky, betokening the approach of daybreak at last; and as the light increased, Leonard was able to make out the serrated line of a rocky coast several miles distant.

"Just what I expected," he said; "that's Spain over there, but I should like to know what part of it."

Munro scanned it long and carefully. "I dinna recognise it," he said. "It's nowhere near Finisterre."

"No; but there's an ugly handful of rocks not far off. You see the skipper's dodge—to bolt and leave her, so that she'd be smashed up if she didn't sink quickly enough."

Leonard blew a whistle, which he had picked up in the chart-house. "Mr. Munro, will you give us steam, please? Bo'sun, get a hand or two and clear up that mess aft. Get the hatch fast." Then, having allowed time for Munro to get to the engine-room, he rang, "Stand by," followed by "Full astern."

The *Penguin* backed away, and when she was at least another couple of miles off-shore, he rang for "Half speed ahead," and slowly headed the ship out to sea.

Putting her on a N.W. course, he ran on; and when by and by he picked up a sight of the land again, he got a clue to his position. They had been off the Oviedo coast and embayed from the open sea to westward. Later he took an observation for longitude, which confirmed his calculation.

IV

It was about three bells—9.30 a.m.—when Leonard noticed all the crew except the bo'sun and Johnson, who was at the wheel, assembled and holding a confab under the break of the fo'c'sle. Guessing that

ON THE OVERDUE LIST

something was in the wind, he thought he had better take the measure of his authority at once, and shouted, "Port watch there, get on with your work! You, look-out man, back to your post! Starboard watch get below!"

"'Arf a mo, Mister; we're just goin' to ask you a question or two." The speaker was a wiry, ferret-eyed fellow known as Curly, who was in the same watch as Johnson and should have been doing look-out duty.

"Come here, then, and step lively."

The men clustered aft of the fore-hatch; and, leaving Johnson at the helm, Leonard ran down on to the bridge deck. He leant over the rail.

"Now then, what's it all about?"

"Well," began Curly, "seein' as how I'm spokesman, the boys want to know where you're takin' the old *Penguin* to, like."

"Back to England."

"Just what we fancied, an' we don't agree. We want you to run her into Corunna, where we reckons to tell the Spanish we claims salvage on her. If you takes her back to England we'll get wages an' nothin' else—savvy?"

"Oh yes, I savvy all right," replied Leonard, "and I savvy you're making a big mistake. You run her into a Spanish port and tell your tale, and you'll get locked up, and the Spanish harbour crowd will collect all the salvage, while we get stale bread and onions in the local jail."

This retort raised a laugh amongst the hands, but Curly lost his temper and swore violently. Leonard continued:

"If there's any salvage to be picked up, an English court is the place where you're most likely to get justice."

"Garn! the ship owners'll pay a big lawyer an' do us out of it—but they couldn't do the Spanish. They'll pay up, an' we'll sign on to bring her home again."

Leonard did not think it worth while to continue the argument.

"Look here," he said, "this voyage is all irregular now—captain and first mate gone, second mate disabled and unconscious. You can't navigate the ship, but I know something about it, and reckon I can find the English Channel and pick up a pilot."

"We can hug the coast o' Spain till we picks up a Spanish pilot," interrupted Curly.

ON THE OVERDUE LIST

"Ye canna do that, ma mannies—I'll no gie ye steam."

Leonard turned to find that the chief engineer had crept up behind him.

"We can soon handle you, Mr. Engineer."

Leonard had sized up the chief speaker, and determined to take the bull by the horns. "Can you? Well, perhaps you can handle me. Make a ring, you chaps. If he wins, it's Spain; if I win, it's back home."

"'Ear, 'ear!" came a chorus of approval. "Come on, Curly; fair fight an' no gouging."

A fair fight it was while it lasted. Leonard's science saved him from personal damage, save to his knuckles, and the seaman's tough skin and thick head enabled him to keep up for some minutes. Then Leonard seized an opening, and a well-directed blow with his right caught Curly fairly on the point, and he went down to take the count—and a bit over.

"Now, what about it, boys?" cried Leonard, having taken a look at his insensible opponent to make sure that he was not seriously hurt.

"What you says goes," came the answer from one man; and "England for me" from another; and a third broke up the conference by exclaiming, "Oh, chuck argyfyng—it's my watch below!"

So ended the incident—it could hardly be called a mutiny, since, after all, Leonard had no official status. Midday came, and securing a shot at the sun, he fixed his position, and laid a definite course to take the *Penguin* out into the recognised steam lane between Finisterre and Ushant.

Their troubles, however, were not over. That afternoon Mr. Munro reported that he must shut down his engines for an urgent repair.

"A steam pipe is ganging west," he growled, "an' if I'm not cross-eyed, a file has had something to do with it—though I'm blest if I ken how he did it without me seeing him."

It was noon next day before they got under way again, and once more set a course towards home.

"I'm afraid I canna trust her at full speed," said Mr. Munro, with a gloomy shake of the head. "We've made a passable repair, but I wouldna like to strain it."

"Thank you, Mr. Munro," replied Leonard. "Give us as much as you consider safe, and we'll jog along."

ON THE OVERDUE LIST

Meanwhile, the condition of the second mate was giving Leonard further cause for worry. Had the *Penguin* been fitted with wireless he would have tried to get into touch with some other ship with a doctor aboard. As it was, under the guidance of Banks, the second engineer, they bound up the broken collar-bone in the manner prescribed by St. John's Ambulance, and kept the injured head bathed and covered with a cold compress. So far there had been no sign of returning consciousness, and they could only keep the patient quiet until he could be placed in hospital. They made a comfortable bed for him in the chart-room, and the captain's steward was told off to act as nurse.

The following morning the steward reported that the mate seemed to be coming to, and Banks went with Leonard to see him. "Don't tell him anything yet," advised Banks. "Perhaps his brain is affected, and anyhow a shock might be serious."

"How are you, sir?" asked Leonard, as the sick man opened his eyes and looked vacantly at them.

"Where am I?" he asked.

"In the chart-room, sir—you've had a bit of an accident."

"What ship's this?"

Clearly his mind was wandering. "Why, the *Penguin*," answered Leonard.

"*Penguin*—don't know her—where's the *Ariosto*?" Then, turning uneasily, he said, "Carry on—carry on," and fell back into a stupor or a deep sleep.

"There you are, sir—there's your orders," said Banks. "He's legally in command, and he's ordered you to carry on. If I was running your job I'd stick that bit in the log."

Leonard agreed, and forthwith made the entry, which Banks signed as witness. The steward meanwhile told the cook, and he in turn passed the word for'ard, so the fact that Leonard was officially in command was soon known to all on board.

As time went on, the amateur skipper found the strain of his new responsibilities beginning to tell on him, but he was loath to quit the bridge. He brought to bear all the knowledge he had picked up in the navigation school to ascertain the position of the ship, and satisfied himself that he had fixed it with fair accuracy. The work of keeping order on board he delegated to the bo'sun, who accepted it with his usual calmness and carried it through efficiently. Leonard was amazed at the number of things he found had to be done—things



"THERE YOU ARE, SIR—THERE'S YOUR ORDERS," SAID BANKS.

ON THE OVERDUE LIST

which had not previously entered his mind. A careful study of the sailing directions for rounding Ushant and entering the English Channel almost frightened him: the course bristled with difficulties for the novice, and it appeared that nothing short of a miracle would take the vessel safely through. He was well acquainted with the sailing manuals for yachtsmen dealing with this stretch of coast, but rules that could be followed with a ten-tonner were useless for navigating a fifteen-hundred-ton low-powered steamer. She wanted sea-room to manœuvre in, and consequently Leonard decided to give the place a wide berth, and took the vessel well to the westward of the ordinary steam lane. He was thankful he had done so when, later on, fog came down, as it frequently does in that area, and added to his anxieties; but not so much as it would have done had he been close in-shore.

"Where do you put her, skipper?" asked Mr. Munro cheerily, after taking note of the fact that Leonard had put in some thirty consecutive hours on the bridge.

"I won't bet on it to a mile or so," answered Leonard, with a smile, "but I calculate we are nor'-west of Ushant, and well clear of the land."

"Fine, mon, fine!" said Mr. Munro encouragingly. "I came up this way in thick weather once with a Geordie skipper, and he found himself making for Limerick round the west side of Ireland instead of up Channel."

Leonard laughed—which was what Mr. Munro had wanted him to do. "We're not so far off our course as that," he said; "but I'm going to stop her at eight bells, and try what we can do with the deep-sea lead."

Accordingly, the heavy lead, well armoured with tallow, was taken for'ard, the hands ranged themselves along the side, each with a good section of the hundred-fathom line, and the "blue pigeon" was successfully flown.

"Eighty fathom and a half," yelled the bo'sun when the line stood up and down.

"Thank you, Bo'sun," Leonard called back. "Let me know the bottom as soon as you can."

Getting in eighty fathom of line and a heavy lead is no light task, but at last it was accomplished, and the bo'sun hailed again. "Small shells and sand, sir."

Leonard carefully examined the chart for the hundredth time, made a note of his estimated position, and set a course towards Lizard

ON THE OVERDUE LIST

Head. Midday brought a little clearance and the sun appeared, enabling him to take a welcome sight.

"Forty miles to go to the Lizard," he shouted to the helmsman, who happened to be his late opponent, Curly. The man's mouth, which was still puffy, expanded in a grin.

"Good for you, sir; you'll make your number before sunset."

The average British sailor-man does not cherish ill-feeling for long, and Curly was willing to acknowledge that Leonard was doing very well at a job that was beyond the power of any man aboard except the second mate.

The long summer's day dragged on, and chugging along between six and seven knots, the familiar lighthouse and signal-station came in sight. Hunting out the international code, Leonard had the ship's number hoisted long before the signal-station could possibly read the flags; and steadily drawing towards the dangerous point, he watched earnestly for some response. At last the answering pennant was run up to the yard-arm, and a minute or two later he saw a Falmouth quay punt heading towards them, "out seeking."

Four men were in her, and when she was near enough to hail, two of them seemed familiar. It couldn't be—yes, thank Heaven, it was!

"Sam—Jim!" he hailed; "come aboard—come aboard!"

"I seen you hanging on to that bit o' line," said Sam, as soon as he reached the deck, "and I told your father you was picked up sure enough."

"But how did you escape?" asked Leonard.

"Fisherman's luck, sir—fisherman's luck! This 'ere old silent death did her job proper—cut our little boat clean in half, she did, and the stone ballast went out of her, and some of the wreck floated. Jim nearly went under, but I grabbed him, and we hung on till a Milford Haven chap come down on us, maybe an hour later, though it seemed a week." Then, casting his eye round, he went on, "But what are you doing aboard 'ere, giving orders like?"

"Oh, I'm in command," laughed Leonard, "and I'm making for Falmouth."

"Well, I'm blowed! All right, we'll help you. Captain Small, what we're working with, has a licence. He'll pilot you."

Jim and another man set off back to Falmouth to arrange for an ambulance to fetch the injured mate, and also to dispatch a wire to Leonard's father.

ON THE OVERDUE LIST

"Leonard's back in Falmouth!" shouted Mr. Burton, running to his wife in a state of great excitement, waving the welcome message in his hand; "and he's brought that blessed *Penguin* in."

"What was that you said about a penguin?" asked Mrs. Burton when she had recovered the self-possession of which the receipt of the good news had temporarily deprived her.

"Why, didn't I tell you that Farraday asked me yesterday to take over the risk of a small steamer which ought to have been reported Finisterre way three or four days ago? He's been badly hit recently, and was nervous of her being reported overdue. I took the chance and relieved him of ten thousand at ten per cent., and I got the wind up this morning when her name appeared on the list, but I decided to wait a day or two before buying cover. Well, that's it—the *Penguin*—the ship Leonard's brought back."

In Falmouth, the following day, Leonard told his story to an astonished Board of Trade official; then waited eagerly for the evening express which was bringing his father.

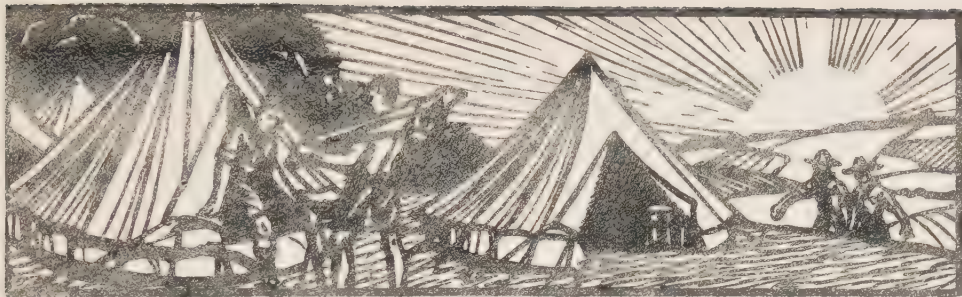
"There's my ship," he said, not without pride, as the two strolled down to the harbour pier. "She's not a bad old tub. Come off and meet Munro. He was awfully decent—taking orders from me."

Mr. Burton looked the *Penguin* over thoroughly. "I see," he remarked, "why they tried to draw insurance money. She's a sturdy ship, but a money-eater—slow and uneconomical. Well, I've made a thousand out of her, thanks to you, and it will cost her owners more than a thousand to settle this matter up. By the way, you'll have a claim for salvage."

"Oh, I've had a fine time really," replied Leonard; "but I do want to lay hands on some cash. I want to give Sam and Jim a new boat."

They got it.





The Shining of the Sun

(After the Harvest Song in "Lorna Doone")

THE sun, oh, the sun, and the shining of the sun
(See, lad, he's up there—bright as polished gold !):
Up with your shirt-sleeves, we've finished with the cold—
We've done with the Winter-time, and Summer has begun !

Chorus—

Oh, the sun, and the sun, and the wonders that he brings !
Birds in the hedgerow, daisies on the sward—
Green tents and wood-smoke and all the thousand things
That make life so wonderful ; and so we praise the Lord !

The trail, oh, the trail, and the riddles of the trail—
Following the footprints stamped upon the mire,
With the crosses and the arrow-heads to lead you till you tire
Up and down the countryside, over hill and dale.

Chorus—

Oh, the trail, and the trail, and the windings of the trail—
Leading over country yet to be explored :
It's a long lane of mystery, but still you'll never fail
To reach home by eventide ; and so you'll praise the Lord !

The hike, oh, the hike, and the glories of the hike—
With your home on your back and your lusty staff in hand,
Heading by the compass straight across the land,
To see what another sort of country may be like !

THE SHINING OF THE SUN

Chorus—

Oh, the hike, and the hike, for it's over dale and hill :

Highway and byway, heatherland and sward—

Trudging as you fancy, stopping when you will,

To camp by the pathwayside and eat, and praise the Lord !

The camp, oh, the camp, for we're going off to-day—

Load up the trek-cart with all the camping gear !

Two weeks of wonderland, the finest in the year—

Haul on the ropes, lads, and so we start away !

Chorus—

Oh, the camp, and the camp, and the camp beside the wood :

The flag's in the tree-tops, the tents are on the sward—

Work time and game time and every time is good,

So stand round the Council Fire, and sing and praise the Lord !

The sun, oh, the sun, and the friendship of the sun—

See, lad, he's up there, smiling down at you ;

Smiling to think, lad, of all the things you'll do

Now that the Summer and the outing has begun !

Chorus—

Oh, the sun, and the sun, and the blessings that he brings :

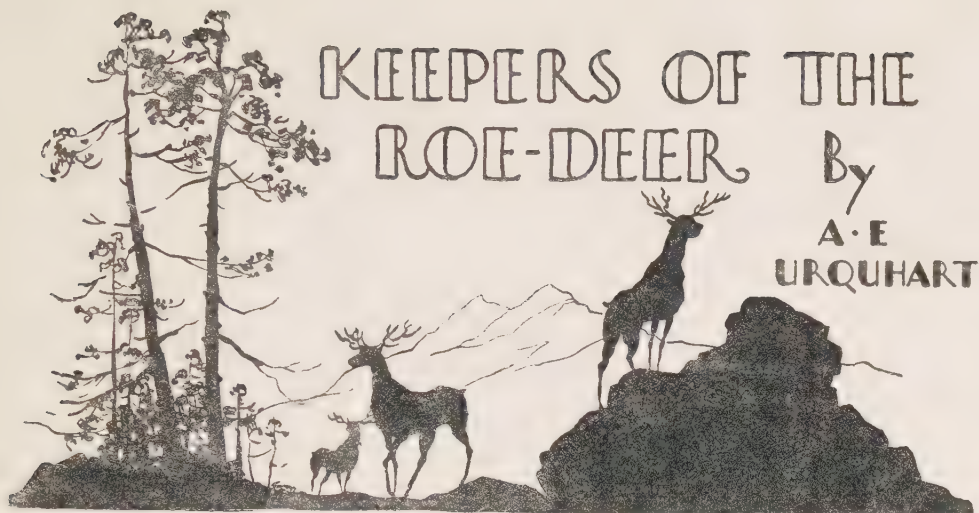
Camp time and hike time—take me at my word,

Old father sun gives us all our finest things ;

So let's make the best of him, and shout and praise the Lord !

HAROLD MARKHAM.





I

SOME two hours before dawn one morning, a young game-keeper lay watching keenly with eye and ear a roadway rising in a gentle slope from the valley beneath, and separated from his post by a fence. The flat rock on which he rested, and the figure of the watcher himself, were hidden by a waist-high clump of heather. It was a favourite sentry-place and a favourite posture for him, for the taut strands of the high deer-fence close to his head brought at intervals faint humming messages of disturbance by bird or animal for a considerable distance along its course. This was specially useful at night ; and now it was so dark that the narrow ribbon of road held a tinge of colour only by contrast with the impenetrable black shade of the pine-forest fringing it.

The watcher lay holding his breath in anxiety to note and interpret correctly an audible warning oscillation which had brought him suddenly to the alert. For many seconds the wire maintained a perceptible movement, punctuated by a faint screeching as the strands chafed against their staples somewhere along the line. A stilly hush had fallen for the moment over the forest's indefinite hum ; and the youth read every sound and impulse of his impromptu signalling apparatus as accurately as though he lay beside a telephone.

The happening had been a long way off, but the watcher gave a slight sigh of surprise and satisfaction at its conclusion. Rising dis-

KEEPERS OF THE ROE-DEER

creetly, he sidled noiselessly through the undergrowth to the rear for some yards. The persistent odour of a recently smoked pipe guided him to the exact spot he sought.

John Macdonald, head-keeper, stirred from a doze as the youth rustled before him. He was a hirsute man, and his bearded face showed like a grey patch against the black heather among which he lay.

"Poachers—more than one—crossed the fence lower down—somewhere by the Black Pool," said the youth.

There was a short pause while the older man reflected. He evidently accepted the accuracy of the information, for when he spoke it was to set forth his plan of action.

"They'll be after the deer on the near side of the bog, then, behind this spur of the wood. Trail them, you. I'll be up through the Barossie Wood by dawn with assistance to head them off. Be cautious, for this will be a capture worth making. Off with you, laddie, and good luck."

The whispered instruction was decisive and urgent; and the two parted hastily, each to his allotted duty.

David Brend moved quietly along the slight gradient inside the fence until he reached the southern bound of the tree-land. Here he paused. It was hardly necessary to look for tracks. The forest itself was impassable in the absence of daylight; and a black pool, the drainage from the wet hillside, lay close to the road embankment. The narrow strip stretching up the hill between these obstacles was the only convenient passage towards the back of the woods. There the deer would be cropping the dewy morning grass, exposed to the stealthy hunter's aim.

Turning sharply to the left, he led off up the fringe of the forest. That he was beginning to feel the excitement of the chase was evident from the caution of his progress and his frequent pauses to listen. At last, from close ahead, came the ringing sound of a gun-shot, like a signal in salute of the grey morning light, now tardily breaking through.

In each stream-hollow Brend now sought the fresh trail, and found it. He was led at last to a little footpath swinging gradually to the right. This he followed, keeping a sharp watch on either side for divergence of his quarry.

The route circled round the southern spur of the wood. Now he traversed a wild, stream-scarred moorland, with the trees still on

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his left. Great granite hills, mist wreathed, rose across the moor on the other hand.

Brend's assurance was rudely disturbed, however, as he looked up to take his bearings. Sudden patches of grey moss appearing at his feet had sent the first unpleasant doubt into his mind. To his dismay the path he trod was leading into the quarter-mile breadth of the Big Moss, a dangerous quagmire stretching from where he stood to the giant boulders at the foot of the nearest hills.

A few paces ahead a grouse rose screaming from its couch in alarm at his approach. Brend paused irresolutely at the sign.

"Faulty scent," was his disconsolate reflection. No one had passed along the pathway since dawn, or the game would have been astir already. His trailing had held a blunder somewhere.

The billows of mist crowning the hills had been descending slowly and threateningly. Gradually they concentrated into a blinding drizzle that reduced the visibility and blotted out all tracks. Brend peered ahead through the rain in despair at his bad luck. As far ahead as his blurred vision could pierce showed the grey and green of the moss. Straggly clumps of grass and infrequent stones marked the footholds of a rude sheep-path traversing the bog; but they were few and far between—mere signposts for the shepherds who knew the passage across. Slimy green puddles from recent heavy rains lurked menacingly in every hollow.

By this time the poachers would be rounding the head of the Moss a mile away, to make their escape along the sheltered ravines of the hillside. Had the weather been dry and the bog passable, he might have headed them off yet. The temptation to try rose in his breast.

"The path's *there*, after all, bad though it may be. And I'll gain on them by crossing, particularly if they're burdened with game," he reflected philosophically. "Nothing venture, nothing win, anyway."

He shivered as he surveyed the uninviting prospect. However, he felt it a point of honour to reject no possible loophole for securing his quarry; so with his mind resolutely made up he pressed forward, springing from tuft to tuft to avoid the pitfalls in the path. Suppleness and his light build carried him forward steadily and with safety.

The greater part of the journey passed thus; but the way seemed endless to David Brend. From the hill-slopes ahead, the mist rolled down in yet heavier and more opaque gusts, and the area of visibility

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contracted correspondingly. The traveller felt immensely solitary. No sound of bird or animal penetrated the curtain of rain that held him apart from the solid world of forest and moorland. Even the precarious footholds on which he staked so much were but pin-points on the surface of the shuddering quagmire that underlay them.

The raw air brought on a fit of coughing, making the solitary figure sway on its balance. One leg slipped suddenly into the slimy water to the side. Brend jerked violently erect with a shudder at the unsavoury contact. The tufts on which he stood were subsiding while he paused. Gradually the fact dawned on him. With strained attention he examined the immediate surroundings. The dotted markings of the pathway ahead had become strangely muddled and indefinite. Could it be that he had missed his way? Slewng round hastily, he traced the path as far back as he could distinguish it.

Behind him, at no more than five yards' distance, lay an isolated patch of black rock—a notable island in this slimy sea. The path, barely visible, wriggled deceptively to the right, round its edge. In passing, he had leapt to the left when the obstruction appeared at his feet—and now that momentary relaxation of caution was likely to cost him dear.

As Brend pictured in his imagination the probable consequences of this new disaster, his whole body tingled with repugnance. Five yards away there was safety, typified and embodied in that invitingly solid rock. Ten short paces only; but paces on a footing where his previous passing had caused the grassy hillocks to subside. Now there was green, watery moss alone to guide his steps back to the junction. To the path at an angle the distance was some four yards, across a black puddle—a hopeless jump from a slippery take-off.

The slime rose treacherously about his feet as he stood, until it trickled over his shoe-tops. The indication was clear and decisive. Speedy action alone could save him—coupled, too, with miraculous agility. Otherwise all was lost.

A panicky instinct to scream rose in the breast of the lad, but he fought it down pluckily, translating his fear into a stronger and keener energy to fight clear. With a quick leap he started to retrace his steps; and his heart gave a great throb as his searching foot found a soggy hold. Again he sprang—but this time he was not so fortunate. His leg sank almost knee-deep into the bedraggled grass.

With a groan David Brend threw himself forward towards his goal,

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stretching muscle and sinew till his clutching fingers gained the coarse growth by the path's margin. Forcing all his remaining strength into a tremendous effort, he trailed his body forward through the clinging bog ; but the strain was too great, and he brought up finally, with safety but a handsbreadth from him. From the waist downwards he was firmly immersed, with the terrible suction of the moss dragging him lower every moment.

As though to crown his plight, the grasses he held slipped through his wet fingers, causing him to clutch here and there for a handhold that would bear his weight. But each attempt to raise himself brought only a merciless slipping back as the soft earth uprooted in his grasp.

A sickly, putrid smell rising from beneath made him shudder with an unbearable nausea. Yet withal it forced him to strive for dear life. How long the struggle lasted he could not afterwards remember very clearly. All he knew was that his questing fingers closed on the half-rotting timber of an old log. Viciously he tore at it till his hand sank in to a firm depth. Would this bear the strain at last ?



WITH A GROAN DAVID BREND THREW HIMSELF FORWARD.

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Wriggling and kicking out behind, Brend levered himself up towards the level of the path. The drag of his clothes seemed to have anchored him hopelessly—his shoes frustrated his best efforts by their added weight. Behind him the bog bubbled and hissed as it sucked tenaciously at its prey. But in spite of it all, Brend won slowly up to the little pathway. Once there, he lay exhausted on its slender security, as a swimmer might stretch along a plank after buffeting with a rough sea.

As the minutes passed, a watery sunshine blinked through with reviving warmth on the young gamekeeper as he lay, warming his limbs, frozen by the icy black water. He chafed his legs a little, and to his surprise found them bare. Shoes and stockings alike had been left in the grip of the moss.

In the rear the mist was billowing away as though it had done its worst, dissipating rapidly on the morning breeze. Brend inhaled in great gulps. Youth and physical fitness were coming to his aid, and soon he was able to rise to his feet. Gathering strength with every step, but withal moving slowly and carefully as one who had learnt a lesson, he moved forward till he stood once more on dry moorland.

Behind a hillock near to his place of landing stood the shepherd's shelter, whose owner had trodden the bog-path. Here he hoped to find the materials for a fire to dry his clammy clothing.

II

As he followed the winding track to the open doorway of the hut Brend heard a gruff voice raised in song. His face brightened at the sound. The shepherd was surely in residence, then, and in jovial mood into the bargain. Confidently he strode forward and entered the hut, with a word of greeting on his lips.

The shelter was a rectangular erection of ill-hewn stone. In the rude walls at either end a square gap served for light and ventilation. The morning sunshine filled the interior with light; but Brend's eyes blinked incredulously around as he viewed the unexpected scene on which he had intruded.

Against the farther wall sat two men, who looked up, startled, from skinning the carcasses of roe-deer. The antlers of one, a buck, protruded from a sack in a corner. Both men were clad in coarse shirts; one wore blue dungarees, the other corduroys. Their shot-guns lay

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close at hand as if to complete the incriminating evidence. Poachers, obviously, and caught literally red-handed. How he wished for his own shot-gun, now lying in the depths of the bog, to take advantage of the surprise.

This much he had observed, when a hand from behind closed on his collar, thrusting him forward with herculean strength, so that he fell on his knees before the two men.

From behind the doorway, where he had been seated, emerged a third man. He was of wild and reckless appearance, his flushed and bulbous countenance surmounted by a cloth cap.

The volley of expletives which showered from the lips of this red-faced man served only to confirm Brend in his conclusion that he had stumbled unceremoniously among his quarry of the morning—the poaching gang. Crouching where he had fallen, he reflected rapidly. Apparent misfortune though the encounter appeared to be, it might be the means of retrieving his morning's error, if he could but make his escape from this hornets' nest.

As the thought came to him he rose from his knees like a sprinter, and in the twinkling of an eye had sprung for the window-gap in the end wall of the hut. The same agility that had brought him through the dangers of the bog carried him like an acrobat in a quick bound over the sill to the greensward outside. Sudden as his entry had been, it was more than matched by the rapidity of his departure. The red-faced man paused in his abusive speech, momentarily nonplussed, while the others ejaculated luridly, as they rose and joined a rush for the door in pursuit.

The steep hillside faced Brend as he landed outside. Doubling back, he made for the bog again, closely pursued, but trusting that his experience in the crossing would carry him free. He was scarcely running with his usual speed as yet, and behind him the man in the blue dungarees, of spare build, hung on his heels. Even along the narrow track between the plashy green moss puddles he pursued recklessly. By the margin his fellows paused, encouraging him to quicker pace. But as Brend had already learned to his cost, disaster awaited the careless stride.

Splash! The sound came suddenly to Brend's ears, and he paused and wheeled round. To his horror he saw the man in like predicament to his own former one, waist-deep in a pool of black water.

His head was turned away from Brend, but the latter could see

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the muscles of his face and neck strained out like cords as he held himself up by a sparse handful of heather. In a moment he would subside slowly to the depths ; and his hoarse tones as he called to his fellows held a pitiable ring of fear. The red-faced man started hesitantly along to the rescue, picking his way gingerly, his bulk submerging him to the ankles as he came. Surely enough he approached, but very slowly, and the blue-trousered poacher was slipping—slipping.

Self-interest gave way to pity in the breast of David Brend. Running lightly back, he bent over the unfortunate man and grasped him by the wrists. Taxing his tired arms to the utmost he drew another prey from the suction of the bog. The relief that showed in the man's eyes as he rose slowly from the enclosing moss was sufficient reward to the rescuer for his action, even though he knew that Redface was plodding up to make him prisoner again.

The big man had no scruples, indeed. One hand closed on the lad's neck, while with the other he heaved his comrade from the mire in a single jerk. Then he started back for the firm ground, pulling Brend after him by the scruff of the neck like a puppy.

Quickly the poachers regained the cover of the hut. The open moorland was too exposed for their liking.

"We'll keep the lad here till we go," snarled Redface viciously, as he crouched by the window, and peered out for any signs that the reckless excursion had been observed. "There's keepers about. I feel it in my bones." He glowered ferociously at Brend, who lay back against the wall. Since he had lost his gun in the bog there was little in his appearance to connect him with the keepers, and Redface apparently looked on him as an intrusive shepherd lad.

"Hist !"

The warning sounded opportunely from the look-out at the rear of the hut, diverting attention from the prisoner. The man was peeping round the side of the window-gap, looking upward toward the hilltop. "Lie low," he said tensely. "There's danger."

As Brend lay close to the wall a long, slanting crack near to the roof stood out to his eye against the silvery sky. His hands were now made fast behind his back, but by wriggling over he manœuvred into a position where he, too, could see the hilltop. To his delight the figure of a man came into his field of vision. Brend's spirits rose at the sight. Easily he recognised the loose-limbed stride as the man paced along the ridge. It was the policeman from Barossie. If he



A HAND FROM BEHIND CLOSED ON HIS COLLAR, THRUSTING HIM FORWARD WITH HERCULEAN STRENGTH.

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were prowling in the neighbourhood it was safe to assume that MacDonald would not be far away. A signal might bring them down on the hut for an easy capture.

Anxiously he looked round for some method of raising the alarm, straining vainly at the tight lashing that bound his hands. Close by, to his left side, crouched Redface. He was bending his huge frame stiffly over like a great sack of corn, watching the movements of the man on the hilltop. Brend's eyes travelled from the poacher's massive shoulders to the gun held loosely in his hand, butt to ground, unwittingly close to the prisoner. How easy it would be to seize the weapon and turn the tables, if he were free !

Suddenly the beginning of a smile wrinkled his face, broadening till he almost laughed aloud at the simplicity of the idea that had occurred to him. He raised his foot, bootless and bare since his struggle in the bog, and swung it cautiously out to the left. Stretching his leg towards the preoccupied poacher, he crooked his toes over the trigger of the gun.

Bang !—the shot rang out.

The explosion of a charge of dynamite in the hut could scarcely have produced a greater effect. Redface dropped the gun as quickly as though the charge had lodged in his body, and sprang aside like a deer. The others took cover in the corners of the hut, under the impression that they had been fired upon. As the sound of the shot died away without any casualty being apparent, the trio picked themselves up, looking sheepishly at one another for the explanation of the unexpected alarm.

Redface gave a growl of anger and threw himself on Brend as he grasped the situation. Covering the lad's face with a huge hand, he held him so tightly as almost to smother him. The other two, recovering from their panic, rose, and the blue-trousered man dragged Redface from his victim.

"The mischief's done now," he said. "Let the boy alone."

Breathlessly they awaited developments. The constable on the hill had vanished ; but a moment later a warning hiss announced his reappearance within view. He was coming directly over the brow of the hill.

Slowly he commenced the descent, picking the easiest way down the hillside as though no set purpose directed his course. To the relief of the poachers he was even turning slightly away from the hut, as though to make a circuit of the bog.

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Redface gave a deep sigh, and wiped the perspiration from his bloated cheeks.

"Maybe he hasn't tumbled," he said hopefully. "It means six months for me if I'm caught this time."

He had obviously recognised the uniform of the constable, for he had lost something of his bravado in the last few minutes, as Brend noted with satisfaction. He lay listening intently to the conversation of the poachers, gaining a fair idea of the situation developing outside from their exclamations of alarm or relief.

The constable's route was a somewhat puzzling one, for he zig-zagged in his descent, with a careless disregard for time and distance. Now he headed for the hut and now turned off towards the distant forest. At last, however, he reached the foot of the hill, and set his back to the poachers' hiding-place, to the intense satisfaction of the hidden watchers, who could scarcely repress their pleasure at the removal of the danger.

Redface leaned incautiously from the doorway, waving a hand mockingly at the retreating figure. David Brend bit his lip with chagrin. To think of such an outcome of the struggles and dangers of the day galled him unbearably. If old Macdonald had really been in the vicinity he would have heard the signal of the gun-shot, and guessed its purport. It was no use, after all, for old Mac was probably miles away in the Barossie Woods, scouting around in vain search for his assistant.

"Hands above your heads, every one of ye," sounded the hoarse voice of the old keeper in his ears. For the second time that day Brend almost doubted the evidence of his senses. His wish was being realised almost as soon as it had crossed his mind. Into his field of vision had come the barrel of a gun, pointing in through the window-gap in the unguarded rear of the poachers. It was followed by the shaggy head of Macdonald himself, his beard bristling aggressively as he fingered the trigger in alarming fashion, aiming straight and true at the huddled group before him.

The shot from the hut had done its work after all, as Brend thankfully realised. The wily keeper and his ally, the policeman, had carried out a very effective piece of deceptive work. While the constable had descended the hill in full view, Macdonald had been crawling along the gullies to the rear for his surprise attack.

The challenge came like a bolt from the blue into the atmosphere

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of jubilation animating the poachers. For the second time in ten minutes Redface dropped his gun as though it had suddenly become red-hot. He led his companions in a gesture of surrender. The hands of the trio rose in the air unhesitatingly as they swung round aghast to face their captor.

Macdonald's eyes twinkled as he glanced down at Brend. "Man, David, ye look surprised," he said casually. "I'll just get one of these men to untie you while we're waiting for the policeman to come back."

The blue-trousered man submissively performed the service, and Brend gladly rose and stretched himself. He was quite content to wait for Macdonald's story till afterwards. It was enough for the present to know that his warning signal had not gone amiss.

As he regained his liberty, the policeman appeared at the door, handcuffs in hand, ready to assist the cunning old keeper with his prisoners.

"A fine morning's bag, Mr. Macdonald," he said. "We played our parts well—and so did the lad, too, for that matter. These are strangers to this part, surely." He ran a professional eye over the prisoners. "Navvies from the new water-works, I suppose?"

Redface shuffled his feet uneasily as he nodded assent. "We've never been in trouble like this before," he assured the constable earnestly.

"I'll find all that out later," said the officer grimly, and the man's face dropped.

With many a chuckle, each at his own and the others' part in the dénouement, the three captors formed their prisoners into line, and marched them off on the long walk back across the moor, exchanging stories as they went.

The eyes of the two men widened as they learned of Brend's adventure in the bog.

"Ye have indeed been immersed in a sea of trouble, David," remarked the old keeper facetiously, glancing down at the miry clothing of his subordinate, "but ye have swum out with but little damage after all."

Brend, intent on holding a gun at the ribs of Redface, made answer without turning his head.

"Yes," he retorted quietly. "But I have brought three good fish ashore with me for my trouble."



A Hundred Years of Rugby Football

By LAURANCE WOODHOUSE

NO game has made such immense strides in the last forty or fifty years as Rugby football. It is just over a century since one, William Webb Ellis, with "a fine disregard for the rules," picked up the ball and ran with it, thus heavily infringing the statutes of football "as she was played," and incidentally introducing the Rugby game. As I am writing this I have before me a picture, dated 1857, which must surely be one of the earliest pictures of Rugby football ever drawn. It is entitled "The Rosh," and depicts about forty sturdy young fellows, wrestling, scragging, hacking, many on the ground, some on their legs, but not a sign of the ball, which one supposes is in the heart of this struggling mass of humanity. A man in military uniform is sprinting alongside this "Rosh"—evidently the referee, though he does not carry a whistle. A cornet would be required to bring these ferocious fellows to their normal senses again.

From this type of game, and rare good sport it was, I have been informed by an old president of the Rugby Union, we have now advanced to a game which is most highly scientific, and which requires brain, brawn, pace, and, in addition, all the manly qualities. It is almost impossible to believe that only about forty years ago Wales, a hot-bed of Rugby football, and some seasons ago *facile princeps* among the countries, was not thought strong enough to raise an international team. In 1880-1 England condescended to give her a fixture, and defeated the Principality by eight goals and six tries to nil! Shades of "Monkey" Gould and Gwyn Nicholls! Imagination fails at the thought of such a huge defeat to-day. Not so many years ago forwards dominated the play and scrums were of long duration; in fact

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it was considered "bad form" to let the ball out. To-day forwards merely get the mastery in order to let the ball out, and swift passing movements are the main feature of polished Rugby. We rarely see these fascinating forward rushes, one man with the ball backed up by all the sturdy forwards fairly forcing their way through the opposition. Finesse and cunning tactics have triumphed over brute force.

Rugby football, like all games which are really worth calling games, is entirely dependent for its success on team work. Occasionally—very, very occasionally—you may see a game won by a brilliant single-handed effort, but, take it all round, the selfish player is a bane to any team. On one occasion I saw an international match very nearly lost by a great player who, early on in the game, broke right through and scored a wonderful try practically by his own effort. So delighted was he with his success that he seemed quite to forget that there were

*Seemed quite to forget
there were fourteen other
players*



fourteen other players on his side, and every time he got the ball he tried to repeat his earlier triumph. His opponents took very good care that he did not, and many splendid openings were wasted because he would not pass the ball.

No, the perfect Rugby team consists of fifteen men who play like one man, each doing his share of the work, perhaps making quite a lot of ground, perhaps making but a little, before he passes to another in a better position; forwards helping backs both in attack and defence, and the whole team indeed working with machine-like uniformity—so machine-like that the selfish player can easily throw it out of gear. Perhaps one of the best instances of perfectly unselfish play occurred when

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Wales beat the New Zealanders at Cardiff in 1905. On that occasion Gwyn Nicholls, about the greatest three-quarter who ever donned a Rugby jersey, was skippering Wales. Naturally, knowing his prowess, the New Zealanders meant to pay special attention to him. The Welshmen foresaw that, and during the week previous to the match they practised very assiduously a special movement which might pierce the New Zealand defence. Their scheme proved successful, thanks to each member working exactly according to plan. The ball came out from the scrum to "Dickie" Owen, the Welsh half. He started away in the direction of Gwyn Nicholls, and the New Zealanders, convinced that the attack would develop on that side of the ground, dashed across. Owen, however, after feinting to pass, hurled the ball back to Pritchard, who sent it on to Gabe, and the last-named passed to "Teddy" Morgan, who just scrambled over the line before the New Zealanders could swing back in their stride. This won the match; and it would have been impossible had not every man done his bit exactly at the right moment.

Your good Rugby footballer must possess initiative and quickness of thought and action. For instance, how often do you see a side attacking for some minutes at a stretch. Time after time scrums are formed close to the opponents' goal line. The ball comes out with almost monotonous regularity, and is passed along from hand to hand, but the defence holds good. Finally, the siege is raised, and the golden opportunity is lost. Not one of the half-backs or three-quarters had thought of taking a drop kick at goal. They had mechanically passed right along the line in the most obvious fashion, and so good points were not obtained. Quickness of thought and action is absolutely essential. The period from the time you get possession of the ball until the time when your opponents are on you is infinitesimal. In that short moment you have to decide whether you will cut through or pass, punt into touch, crosskick, or drop at goal; and, at the same time, you must know where your supporters are standing, and whether they are better placed or not than yourself. It has all got to be decided in far less time than it took to write these words, and even to-day, after very many years of playing and watching Rugby football, I never cease to wonder at the lightning judgments taken by such a player as W. J. A. Davies. There was never any knowing what he would do when he received one of those thunderbolt passes from Kershaw. As a rule, his opponents would tell you, he would do exactly the oppo-

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site thing to what they naturally expected, and he always seemed to have time to do it well, although no man was ever more closely watched than the old England captain.

Another old England captain, a famous forward, told me he once scored a try for his county against the South Africans in a very remarkable manner. He found himself alone with the ball about seven or eight yards from the South African line, but close to the touch line. Marsburg, the South African full-back, was coming at him from an angle, and had him hemmed in, as merely a shove would put him over the touch line, and there was no one to pass to on the inside. In desperation he feigned to throw the ball towards touch, and Marsburg, for once caught napping, jumped across in that direction, leaving a clear path for the Englishman to run in. As he put it, "No one was more surprised than the scorer, but there was nothing else to do, so I just chanced it and it came off." Pretty quick thinking that!

Although it cannot be too often stated that you must on no account lose your temper at Rugby football, yet it is not a game to be played with kid gloves. Equally, it is not a game to be played roughly. There is a very big difference between playing hard and playing roughly or coarsely. In the latter case the punishment fits the crime, for it is nearly always the rough player who comes off second best by the end of the game. Nearly all the *hardest* players are the very finest type of sportsmen both on and off the field. It is true that they have grassed you heavily time after time—it is true that they have handed you off very powerfully, and you are sore and aching all over at the end of the match; but they have done nothing viciously, and you are glad to meet them again and again because—well—because they are jolly good fellows, and play the game as it should be played and in the right spirit. No one has ever heard a hard word spoken about G. H. D. O. Lyon, the old England and United Services full-back, yet no one who has ever been tackled by him is likely to forget the sensation. As you picked yourself up after he had dealt with you, you wondered if by any chance he had left you a rib or two to go on with. And so with the majority of Rugby players. I always think, however, that it is no game for cups or trophies. These cup matches lead to over keenness, and with that comes roughness, and with roughness comes good-bye to Rugby football. It is also a curious but true fact that clubs with unbroken records generally degenerate into roughness. A team that has gone through three-quarters of the season

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without meeting with a defeat is apt to lose all sense of proportion. They are so keen to finish up without a lost game on their fixture card that they must win at any price. Of course, every team wants to win every time they play, but surely victory is, or should be, the second consideration. The first is the game and "playing the game" at any price. Victory is to be won if possible—but *not* at any price. To my mind, happy is the club that possesses no record except that of always playing the game. Rugby football, if not played absolutely to the spirit (never mind the laws) of the game, merely develops into a rough and tumble of a very unseemly and unsightly order.

Not a game to be played with kid gloves.



If you must not play roughly, you must assuredly not play faint-heartedly. Faint heart, like ruffian, is sure to get damaged. He will try to save himself when tackled, and in all probability will break or injure something, whereas, if he had let himself go, unconsciously and subconsciously he would have fallen all right, with nothing worse than a shaking. Certainly there are a few rare instances of justifiable funk. Such a one took place some years ago on a ground frozen hard as a rock and really unfit for play. A huge Yorkshire forward with the ball under his arm and swinging a hand as big as a leg of mutton came galloping down the field, with only a back between him and the line. There was no doubt he meant business, and at the very last moment the back side-stepped him. "Why didn't you collar him?" asked the captain afterwards. "Collar him! collar him!" said the back indignantly. "Why! it took me all my time to get out of his way!"

Of course this was an exceptional case, but in the ordinary way the harder and straighter you go for your man the less likely you are to hurt yourself. There are many players who are not really funks, to use an old English term, but who "start cold." They are nervous

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"It took me all my time
to get out of his way"



and fidgety, don't know what to do with the ball when it comes to them, and hesitate instead of going straight at the man with the ball. Now, the best thing those fellows can do is, at the earliest possible moment, to run into a warm tackle, or connect with a hefty hand-off. It is wonderful how one's blood warms up after a hard roll on Mother Earth, or when the stars have ceased twinkling in one's eyes. It seems to put new life and dash into you, and you play a proper game thereafter. Therefore, I say to all "coldfeeters"—Get "blooded" as early in the game as possible, and you will have no cause to blush afterwards. There is many a fellow who funks going into the sea and stands paddling his feet who, when pushed into

the deep water, thoroughly enjoys himself. It is that shivery start.

To hark back to the immense strides that the game has made all over the world. It is not many years since the first French team visited England and played a match against the Civil Services. It was a humorously pathetic performance. Indeed, as a spectator told me, it was rather like a knockabout music-hall entertainment, and full of funny incidents. To-day there are over 950 Rugby clubs in France ; she has seriously to be reckoned with in the international matches, for she has already beaten both Scotland and Ireland. South Africa and New Zealand are keen and brilliant disciples of the game. Tours to these overseas dominions are of as great importance, politically, as the great cricket tours. Rugby football, in fact, has never flourished so vigorously and has never been played so scientifically as it is to-day. *Floreat Rugby football !*



A Defect of Memory

By GEORGE S. SURREY

I

MAYBE if Gilly had been at the post when the trouble started it would not have come to the development it did. But Gilly was not on hand. The inward-bound mail of the Reindeer Lake packet, on whose line of route the trading post at Lake Moose was situated, was due in that day, and the H.B.C. packets being seldom behind scheduled time, no matter how bad the weather, Gilly had taken his snowshoes and gone off immediately after breakfast to meet Joe Guilbert and his lusty team of rough-coated dogs.

Possibly the mail held something for Gilly himself—he hoped so, anyway; and though he was well aware that the bag would not be opened until the post was reached, boy-like, he discovered a certain impatience in waiting, and some sort of satisfaction in seeing Guilbert before anyone else belonging to the post. So far as he knew, there was no reason why he should not go—his father, the factor, having no particular need of him just then.

All the same, it was unfortunate that he was not somewhere within call when Francis Reid, hurriedly turning the angle of the strongly built, snow-weighted trade room, the door of which he remembered to have left unlocked, came upon Ah-Meek (The Beaver) in the very act of leaving the room.

Factor Reid's bushy eyebrows came down in an angry frown at once. It was forbidden that an Indian should be in the trade room by himself; every Indian knew the rule, and none better than Ah-Meek, son of Wash-gish, the hunter of the post.

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"What th' mischief are ye up to there, ye imp of darkness?" demanded the factor vehemently.

He was not an ill-tempered man by any means, and many years of service with the Company had taught him the need of holding in check a natural hastiness of disposition; for to deal successfully with the Red Men, patience, much patience, is required. But at the moment he was annoyed with himself—for having forgotten to fasten the door—and this made him the more angry with the Indian lad who had so evidently taken advantage of his forgetfulness.

Ah-Meek made no answer. He was a well-built, if somewhat slim lad for fourteen, and, therefore, almost a man, with all a Red Man's dignity. Slightly checking at the sight of the factor, he eyed him for a couple of seconds, not a muscle of his smooth face moving; then, with a faint lifting of his head, he turned away.

But he was not to get off so easily. Three long strides, and Reid was beside him, grabbed him by the arm, and partly twisted him round.

"What's it ye've taken?" he demanded bluntly.

A trifle higher lifted the dark head, but Ah-Meek kept silence, perhaps the most irritating rejoinder possible to an angry question.

The factor shook him urgently. "What is it ye've made free with, eh?" he demanded in a higher and still more angry tone. "Ye've not been inside yon room just for nothing. What have ye brought away with ye? Answer me!"

But the Beaver did not answer, thereby adding corroboration to the factor's conviction of his guilt. But he made no effort to free himself. His eyes were steadily fixed on the great snow masses topping the young trees that made a fantastically bulging line down to the edge of the frozen lake, a quarter of a mile beyond.

"Now, by my soul, ye saucy son of th' pit," roared the man, "ye'll not answer then! But I'll know what it is ye've been stealin' before ye're a minute older;" and this time, beneath the twist of his powerful hand, Ah-Meek was all but swung off his balance. "Own up, or there's a whip 'll make ye talk. Get in yon room and I'll find out for myself what ye've been liftin'," commanded the factor, twisting the lad round towards the door. "A thief! Ye ought to think shame of yourself. Ah!"

With the ejaculation he turned quickly and began to run, though he checked himself almost immediately. For with a sudden adroit twist and swerve the Indian lad had snatched his caribou-coated arm from the man's grasp, and with the same movement started to run like a

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deer across the hard tramped snow. There was anger in his heart. The threat of a whipping had touched his pride to the quick. At the moment he hated the factor, the post, and every white man in it. Even the influence of Gilly, had he been there, would have failed just then to soothe Ah-Meek's outraged pride or turn him from the resentful purpose that suddenly seized him.

Unable to follow at an equal pace, the factor stared disgustedly after the quick-moving figure, within a minute to disappear among the timber.

Muttering with exasperation, Reid stepped within the trade room, though with small expectation of being able to detect from amongst its multifarious collection of goods what particular article had gone off in company with the Beaver.

He was hurt as well as angry. Theft from the trade room was no common occurrence. Red Men were honest enough, though now and again, as among white men, there cropped up one not to be trusted. An Indian might surreptitiously take to himself something that he particularly coveted, and, if detected, would at once restore the annexed article; but such effrontery as this of the Beaver's was something novel and unlooked for. The Beaver's father had been known to and trusted by the factor for many years—for longer than the Beaver had existed—and not once had his employer found reason to suspect him. That Wash-gish was the father of a thief was something to be grieved as well as angry about.

Yet the factor had not the slightest doubt in his mind. His trust had been unfounded; and such a discovery is apt to make a man stubborn in his anger and resolute against excuse for the culprit.

"That lad quits th' post from now on. I'll not have him here," the factor told himself, with grim decision, as he left the big building, securely locking the door behind him. "And if it means Wash-gish going as well—well, he'll have to go. I'll have no thieves around me—no one, man, woman, or boy, who's not to be trusted. Th' young scallawag! And him runnin' with my own lad as I've allowed him! Gilly, lad, there's a bad dose for ye to take in a wee while."

A "bad dose" indeed it was for Gilly when, in time for the midday meal, he returned to the post, having failed to meet Joe Guilbert.

"Where's Ah-Meek, Dad?" he inquired, as he entered the wooden-floored living-room where his father, close to the big open fire, was busy with pen and ink. "I can't find him anywhere."

"Ah, it's a long time ye'll be lookin' for him, I doubt not," replied

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his father without looking up. "But ye'll not spend th' time, Gilly lad."

"Why not?" the boy asked in surprise.

"Because I'll not have ye havin' any more truck with a thief."

"A thief!"

The surprise in Gilly's blue eyes turned to sheer wonderment.

"Ay, a thief; that's what I said; ay, and mean."

"But, Dad, Ah-Meek a thief!" said Gilly. "What—whatever has happened? A thief! But it's not possible. What does it mean, Dad?"

Gilly had a right to be puzzled. For the best part of his sixteen years he and the meat-hunter's son had been companions, playmates, and the best of friends. Never had his father found cause to check their well-knit intimacy. On the contrary, he had encouraged it; for well he knew that much as he could teach his son of the lore of the wilderness, there were truths of woodcraft and huntercraft of which the Indians knew even more than himself, and he was more than willing his son should acquire the knowledge. Summer and winter the two lads had been together, on the lake, in the great forests, amid the snow-drifts, and along the sled trails. Apt pupils of Wash-gish, each of the lads had learned something of value from the other; such an extensive and early won knowledge would, the factor was aware, make his son a more valuable servant of "The Company," for which he was intended.

"I hadn't thought it possible, Gilly; but so it is, and arguin' won't make it any different. It means what I've said: Ah-Meek is a thief; and because of that my son has no more truck with him. I want ye to remember, lad," the factor concluded gravely.

Gilly sat down, wholly nonplussed, staring at his father. "But surely, Dad, there must be some mistake," he at last ventured.

"If there was, I wouldn't be tellin' ye what I am now," returned his father. "I found th' lad comin' from the trade room, where I'd left th' door unlocked, and I asked him what he'd been taking. He said nothing. He'd no' speak a word for all my asking. I'm wantin' no more proof than that. If he'd no' been stealin', he'd 've been quick to say so, like any honest man. He said nothing. He's away; and while I'm in charge here, he'll stay away. I'll have no thieves at my post. If he comes back here he'll get th' whipping that a thief deserves."

"And his—Wash-gish?" hesitated Gilly.

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"That's to see," the factor returned shortly; and turned to his writing again, for he had letters to add to the expected incoming mail-runner's bag.

Dinner was an unhappy meal; never had Gilly sat down to one he enjoyed less. His father said nothing, and the boy did not speak. But with almost every mouthful he was repeating to himself that some terrible mistake must have occurred; it was impossible that Ah-Meek could be a thief.

"Ye'll see that Macdonald and Crozet will be all fit to start when the packet arrives, Gilly lad," directed the factor, as he left his chair to return to the living-room. "There's wild weather comin', I'm thinkin', and we must have no delay at their starting."

II

HAVING ascertained that the two men who were to take over the mail packet for the run to the next post at Lac La Ronge had their preparations complete, Gilly, sick at heart, left the post and wandered dismally wherever his feet cared to take him. He had lost interest in the coming of the packet, though it was one of the great events of the winter. Without a thought against his father, he still could not bring himself to believe that his friend—friendship is no matter of race or colour of skin—was guilty of the crime imputed to him. There *must* be a mistake somewhere.

He would go to see Wash-gish. But the Indian hunter's shack was empty save for its owner's squaw, and she told Gilly that her husband had gone to fetch meat from one of his caches. Of Ah-Meek's whereabouts she had no knowledge.

Gilly turned away, seeking the forest, where the queerly outlined trees bearing their massed snow-caps seemed to offer a companionship of which he stood in need. Was there nothing he could do to put things right? There must be something. And presently the idea came to him. Ah-Meek must be found, must return to the post, and, once there, beyond all doubt an explanation would be forthcoming that would be acceptable to the factor. For surely if he, Gilly, urged him, the Beaver would speak and prove that he was not guilty.

And the quicker the better—at once, unless a more fearful tragedy were to befall. For if Ah-Meek had left the post, as seemed likely (neither his gun nor his snowshoes were visible in the shack), without

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dogs, without food, his going was no less than the act of one seeking death. Even an Indian, alone and without supplies, would be unable to remain alive for long in the winter wilderness. He must be found.

At once Gilly became active and eager. Without hesitation he made his way between the ghostly-looking trees to cut the trail that wound eastward, a twisted and crumpled ribbon extending over flat and hill, still lake and frozen river, until it swung due north for the post whence the packeteers had come. Either east or west Ah-Meek must have gone, since sheer instinct would have kept the Indian's feet to a trail and prevented his wandering haphazard across the frozen land ; and eastward seemed the likelier direction for him to have chosen.

No sooner had Gilly stepped from the shelter of the timber than he found himself enveloped in a dense cloud of whirling snowflakes—balls of snow rather, round, hard pellets like shot, that whipped and stung his uncovered face. A fierce, knife-edged wind, straight from the vast distances of the Barrens, that tore in a never-ceasing stream of howling fury across the land, had leaped into unsuspected existence while he had loitered through the sheltering timber, and now wrapped and smothered him in its numbing grip. For many seconds the lad had actually to fight for breath, as, bent almost double, he braced himself to stumble along the open trail.

Well did Gilly know these awful blizzards and their danger to those for whom speedy shelter was impossible. Dazed and bewildered, a man, even an Indian, could lose the obliterated trail with fatal ease, to wander, blinded and helpless, to certain destruction. Yet it was eastward, not in the direction of the post and safety, that he continued to fight his way, a blurred shadow amid the whirling blanket of whiteness, more than once almost carried off his feet by the smashing blows of the wind. Somewhere ahead was Ah-Meek, and he had to be found and brought back.

Sense of time was quickly lost ; the rate of progress gave no indication whether five or fifty minutes had passed, but the hard, loose snow pellets had not formed a depth sufficient—as yet—to cause Gilly any fear that he had strayed from the trail, the ground being firm beneath his feet. No thought of the foolhardiness of his enterprise entered his head as he tested his strength and endurance against the opposition of the blizzard. He must find Ah-Meek. Doubly was that his duty—to his friend, and to the father of his friend.

Suddenly something struck him, full front, with such tremendous



SUDDENLY SOMETHING STRUCK HIM, FULL FRONT.

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force that his senses were momentarily scattered, and he was bowled over like a ninepin. Dazed as much by the surprise as the shock, he found his feet and lurched forward a few steps, only to find himself tripped and flung on his face, to fall upon something soft that moved and gave beneath his groping limbs.

It was a man, so he made out, evidently the worse sufferer by the collision that had first knocked him down ; and for the moment Gilly's heart leaped. Ah-Meek ! But he was quickly undeceived.

"Tonnerre du diable !" spluttered an angry and half stifled voice ; and the speaker made a vigorous effort to push away the weight pressing on him and gain his feet. "W'at ees——" The wind and the snow drowned the rest.

"Who is it ?" bellowed Gilly, scrambling away.

"Sacré nom ! I show you who eet ees you knock down like one beeg bull caribou," came the angry answer ; and the speaker, a grotesque-looking bundle little more than five feet in height and almost as wide across, back to the blizzard, thrust his head almost under Gilly's chin. "W'at you——"

And then Gilly knew the man, a half-breed trapper from Reindeer Lake—Joe Guilbert, tracker of the expected packet, and noted from Cumberland House to the Beaver River as much for his bull's voice and persistent pugnacity as for his skill as a voyageur.

"It's all right ; I'm Gilly Reid. Where's the packet ?" yelled back the lad.

For a minute or two they held fragmentary conversation, and Gilly learned how ill-luck had persistently dogged the packeteers, culminating in sheer disaster. Tremendous snow-storms had delayed them from the start. A whole chapter of unprecedented accidents had followed. Two of their dogs had discovered—and swallowed—poisoned wolf-bait, and died. Then, three nights back, the men had been aroused to find the dogs fighting among themselves, and a great lynx that, attracted by the smell of the dogfeed, had tumbled down from a tree upon their camp. Billy Scooner, the driver, snatching his axe, and going to the dogs' assistance, had had the misfortune to wound himself ; and when the mix-up was ended and things straightened out, two of the dogs—the best two, since ill-luck is invariably thorough—were dying, their bellies ripped up by the scythe-like talons of the yellow cat, and Billy was fainting from loss of blood, the axe having severed a small artery in his leg.

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Fever attacked the man next day, but they had struggled on, the half-breed taking his place in the traces. He had wanted to rest up, but Billy would not hear of it. Food they had in plenty, but the packet was already well beyond schedule time, and further delay of the mail was not to be thought of. The mail must go through.

And then the last blow had fallen. The surviving dog—he had always been a cur, Joe sneered savagely—had deserted them during the night. So, taking the precious mail-case, and leaving the sled and his companion as comfortable as possible, the tracker had pushed on alone.

"And Billy!" repeated Guilbert, "five—seex—mebbe ten mile back; a man lose heem sense in this sacré blizzard. Yaas, mebbe fin' Billy alive; but heem ver' seek."

There was but one thing to do. For the time being even the Beaver faded into the background. He, Gilly, must go on to Billy Scooner's help at once, otherwise help might come too late. But for a moment he hesitated.

"Have you met an Indian on the trail?" he yelled, his mouth at Joe's ear. "Ah-Meek—son of Wash-gish."

The tracker shook his head. "Mush!" he bellowed as though to a dog team, and in ten seconds was lost in the whirling blanket of snow.

Nothing so saps a man's strength, not even the most intense cold, as battling against the fury of a snow blizzard; and, tough as he was, at the end of an estimated couple of miles Gilly was feeling the strain. The awful chill of the almost solid atmosphere—he felt as if he were breathing in ice—numbed his lungs; breathing grew more painful with every ten yards covered; his thigh muscles felt as though the strings had been strained too tightly; they burned with painful throbbing. But a man's life hung in the balance; he must go on until Scooner was found or—he dropped.

A brief rest, crouched, shivering, in the poor shelter of a snow mound that covered a clump of low brush, eased his lungs somewhat, and Gilly went on, belief that he still held to the trail little more than a hope. The brief northern afternoon was passing, and with the coming of the already threatening darkness of night, the horrors of the blizzard would be intensified. As he beat his way forward, he wondered whether Guilbert had reached the post, whether already men were on the way to the rescue of the wounded dog-driver. Catching his snow-shoe in the snow, he stumbled and all but fell, and the shock, slight enough, jarred his numbing brain into activity.

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Rescue ! Who was there available ? In the dead of the winter there were few men at the tiny settlement—his father and Lagrange the clerk ; Silverlock the Free Trader ; Wash-gish and two or three old men. Crozet and Macdonald could not be counted upon, for the mail must not be held up. Of course, there was Ah-Meek ; he would be one of the first . . .

And then the semi-consciousness that had gripped his mind while he had been stumbling forward was lifted. Why, it was to find Ah-Meek that he had started out—Ah-Meek whom his father had threatened with the whip and driven from the post because he was a thief ! Again he stumbled, fell, and only with the greatest difficulty found his feet again.

The tumble brought to him the realisation of his own failure—to save his friend and to save the wounded dog-driver. And with the bitter truth came understanding of his own danger—that his strength was exhausted, and that unless he found shelter and warmth quickly, a third victim to the blizzard was a certainty. He had done his best ; he could do no more.

Turning his back to the wind, Gilly set forth desperately at right angles to the direction he had been following. Maybe it was hours, maybe minutes, for his brain had ceased every function save that of goading continued movement into his spent and complaining legs, before Gilly's outstretched hands encountered an obstacle, and he realised that he had struck timber. After that he remembered nothing more until he opened his eyes upon a misty gloom, and found himself surrounded by white patched tree-stems and great, gleaming mounds of fluffy whiteness—the " snow mushrooms " that had formed on fallen logs and stumps—and long, soft festoons linking branch to branch.

His unguided feet had carried him into the heart of a pine wood.

III

FOOD he had none, but matches were forthcoming ; and when he forced his stiffened limbs into action it was to find that some measure of strength had returned to them. Soon he was crouching over a fire, and with warmth came renewal of life.

It was bitter cold at the edge of the wood, but the snow had ceased and the wind dwindled to a mere breeze. With difficulty picking up his tracks of the night before, Gilly came to where he believed the trail

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to be. He had made up his mind. He would continue eastward until he came upon Scooner. But the decision was abandoned as soon as he found the trail. Plainly marked were the tracks of a sled going in the direction of the post, a weighty sled, and drawn, not by dogs, but by a man travelling at a slow pace. And the tracks were fresh, made but a few hours before.

For a while he stood wondering. It seemed incredible that, though Joe Guilbert could have gained the post with the mail-case and the news of his abandoned companion, any man should have battled his way against the blizzard, found Scooner, and returned with him to Lake Moose. Still less believable was it that the injured dog-driver should himself have drawn the sledge to the post. But plainly for any hunter or voyageur of the North to read was the tale that the packeteers' sled had passed on to the post.

With thankfulness in his heart Gilly followed the sled tracks.

Two hours later his keen eyes caught a dark speck moving upon the seemingly limitless white landscape ahead, and he quickened his pace. Soon he was close enough to see that there were actually two specks—a sled and a man hauling it. The line hung over a drooping shoulder, and the holder moved so slowly, with bowed head, that it seemed he hardly had the power to place one foot before the other. Though Gilly's snowshoes moved noisily over the gritty, frozen snow, the man did not even raise his listless head until the lad was alongside. Then he turned stiffly, head and body together, showing a haggard face and eyes that were wholly devoid of expression.

It was Ah-Meek.

For ten seconds the two stared, the one with a joyfulness too great for speech, the other with not a flicker of interest or recognition. Then a yell burst from Gilly.

"It's me, Ah-Meek—Gilly!" he shouted ecstatically; and seizing the Indian's limp hand between his, he shook the limb with a vigour that almost dragged the other off his balance. "What's the matter? Don't you know me?" he cried. "I came to find you."

The staring, faded eyes of the young Indian flickered ever so faintly.

"Yes," he answered in a voice that appeared to come from a great distance, so thin and low was it; "you are my——" and he stopped abruptly.

"Your brother," completed Gilly for him. "Why, sure; now an' always; the same as ever. Where've you been? I've been hunt-



"WHAT'S THE MATTER? DON'T YOU KNOW ME?" HE CRIED.

ing you. What's happened? Where----?" he turned and pointed at the sled, upon which he saw a shapeless bundle, wrapped in the tarpaulin sled cover, firmly tied.

"Driver—Company packet—the post," murmured Ah-Meek.

"You found him! And he's alive?" The Indian's head made a faint movement. "Bully for you, Beaver. I tried to find him, but th' blizzard was too much for me. It got me down an' I had to give it best. But you . . ." He looked curiously at Ah-Meek who, he now noticed, was wearing no outer garment above his caribou coat. "Great Scott! you've lived through that awful blizzard like that! It's a wonder you're alive. But it's great that you found Billy. What is it? Can't you talk?"

It was only too evident that Ah-Meek must have suffered terribly. Though a man who had strength to walk and draw a sled should have been able to speak, yet he made no answer. A glimmer of animation

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had crept into his face, but his staring eyes remained dull as if no life existed in the brain behind them. They suggested something more than physical suffering. The blizzard had beaten and all but conquered his body ; and in the long hours spent beside the wounded dog-driver there had awakened in Ah-Meek's brain a dull but painful consciousness of his fault. He had felt the humbling of his pride ; the fires of resentment had dulled as his half-frozen body grew weaker. Perhaps, though hardly aware of it, the influence of his friendship with Gilly had manifested itself. The temptation to abandon the packet runner to his fate had weakened and died.

" Here, give me the line," commanded Gilly.

But the Beaver raised a hand and pointed limply along the forward trail, making a motion of his head that the white lad construed into a sign that he should go on.

" But . . . Oh, don't act so crazy," he broke out. " You're played out ; I can see it. I'm fresh as paint. Give me the line."

Ah-Meek moved to him half a pace. He shook his head.

" The son of the Master not walk with—a thief," he said slowly, his voice low but distinct.

And at that Gilly understood. The whole pitiful business crossed his mind like a flash of lightning.

" But I don't believe it," he cried out vehemently. " The Beaver is my brother. He is not a thief."

Into the dark features stole an expression that was neither one of anger nor of pride but of overwhelming grief.

" Indian—him thief," he repeated. " He who was my brother must not speak or walk with thief."

" Here, give me the line, Beaver," cried Gilly, and took it.

And the sled started again, Ah-Meek walking behind it. The will of the white race had prevailed over that of the red.

Five miles from the post they were met by a sled, the dogs galloping, a man running on each side. These were Joe Guilbert and Francis Reid himself. The factor's first look was towards his son, his second at Ah-Meek ; but he said nothing.

" It's all right, Dad," cried Gilly. " Billy's here and alive, thanks to the Beaver. He found him and was bringing him along to the post ; I've only just caught 'em up. The storm gave me a bad time, but I'm fine—but that hungry !"

" Thank Heaven you're safe," breathed Reid fervently.

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"Sacré; but eet ces a miracle," chimed in Guilbert piously. "But the miracle eet will be spoil', M'sieur, eef we do not get them queek home. Le garçon"—he nodded at Ah-Meek—"he drop in hees tracks queek."

And the Beaver did not—could not—resist when the tracker picked him up and dumped him on the empty sled with a rabbit skin blanket over him.

It was Guilbert who had most of the conversation during the run back. Gilly got in a few words of answer and explanation, but the factor said nothing.

Care of the wounded man was the first consideration when the post was reached, and with him Reid busied himself, while one of the Indian servants made ready food and boiling hot coffee for Gilly and the Beaver. But as soon as his father was free Gilly went to him.

"It's to Ah-Meek, Dad, that Billy owes it that he's alive," he said. "He found an' stayed with him, and was bringing him along all right. Surely, Dad, you won't forget that? You'd told him what'd happen if he showed his face here again, but that didn't prevent him coming back. He took th' risk."

"Common humanity, my son," rejoined the factor. "I've known th' Red Man well enough these years to be sure he'd no' be willin' to let a man die. Forbye, Ah-Meek's the Company's servant—or his father is."

"Sure, Dad; but there wasn't any need he should try to bring Billy back," urged Gilly. "He knew that Joe had gone on, and that somehow or other we here'd do everything possible to save Billy. And he might have quit when I came on him. He wasn't bound to come along with me."

"He was a thief. He did not deny it," declared his father stubbornly, after a pause.

"But hasn't he made good, Dad?—if it is, as you say, he did steal something," Gilly pleaded.

The factor made no answer. Long training with the Company, and a rigid adherence to the exact principle of what constituted right and wrong, were against easy alteration of his judgment. And in the following silence, from his seat near the great fire, Ah-Meek rose and came softly across the living-room. His face was sharp and drawn, but there was a queer brightness in his haggard eyes. The last shred of the Red Man's stubborn pride had given way. Ah-Meek had con-

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quered himself. Yet weak, he stumbled slightly, and at the noise father and son turned sharply about.

Drawing a hand from within his coat, Ah-Meek held it out towards the factor. On the upturned palm was a small object of wood, stained a bright magenta, and shiny metal work: a common jew's-harp—one of those childish toys that so capture the fancy of Indian youths. Maybe its value would be ten cents.

Ah-Meek said nothing, and Gilly and his father stared blankly at the trumpery toy.

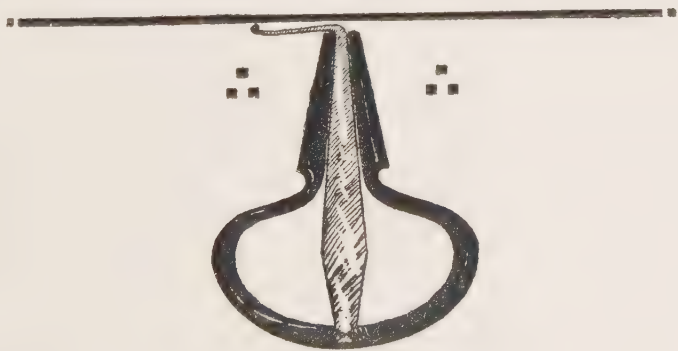
Then, suddenly, a flush swept across the factor's weatherbeaten face. He had remembered.

Months earlier, at the end of the previous summer, when the Indians who had camped in the neighbourhood of the settlement when they had come to the post to make their winter trade, and obtain the goods needed to sustain them during the long winter months while trapping, he had promised to Ah-Meek one of these jew's-harps—and had forgotten to make the promise good. Not until this moment had the lightly-spoken words been recalled.

But Ah-Meek had remembered.

The factor's sinewy throat made a movement as if he had swallowed something hard. But he was a just man. His big hand went out to rest on the Beaver's shoulder.

"Lad, it's me that was wrong—if ye were no' just right," he said steadily. "There's no more to say about it—but that ye'll keep yon wee instrument. It's yours."



The Reason Why

By HERBERT M^CKAY, B.Sc.

WHY?

We are always asking why. And we are quite right to ask why. If we can supply the answer ourselves, so much the better. There always is an answer, though it may take some trouble to find it.

I asked a number of quite small boys to draw a teapot. Some of the teapots were correctly drawn and some were not. The spout was too short or too long.



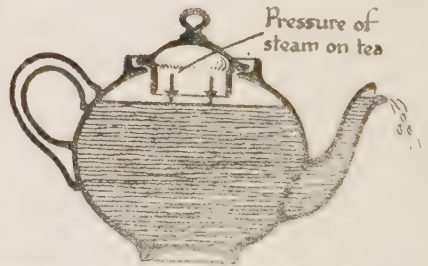
THE SPOUT OF A TEAPOT—1, TOO SHORT; 2, TOO LONG; 3, CORRECT.

When it was pointed out to them that there are important reasons why the spout of a teapot should be a certain

length, those who were wrong saw *why* they were wrong, and I do not think any of them will make the same mistake again. Of course, the interesting thing about the spout of a teapot is that it is brought up to a level with the top of the pot. If it were any lower the teapot could not be filled without the tea pouring out of the spout. There is no point in making the spout any higher. If it were higher it would be more likely to get broken off.

There is much more that you can find out about the spout of a teapot. The lower part is wide, so that there is plenty of room to join the spout to the rest of the pot.

The upper part is narrow, so that the tea does not pour out too quickly. The end of the spout is bent over, so that the stream of tea may be turned down toward the cup. A V-shaped piece is cut out of the end of the spout. This makes the tea pour out better, because the air-pressure is more even. The spout is usually widened a little at the upper end to keep it from clogging with tea-leaves.



BUT FOR THE SMALL HOLE IN THE LID, THE PRESSURE OF STEAM IN THE POT WOULD FORCE THE TEA OUT OF THE SPOUT.

THE REASON WHY

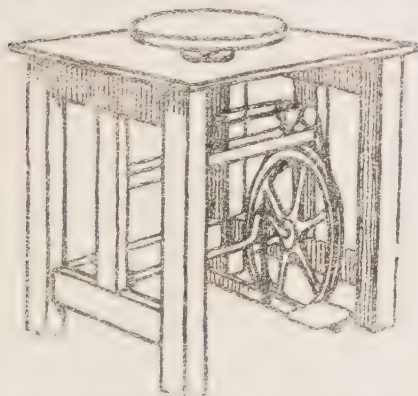
This does not finish all that you may find out about a teapot. The lid has a very deep rim. This keeps it from falling off when the pot is tilted in pouring out tea. There is a small hole in the lid, which allows steam to escape. If steam formed in the pot it would press the tea out of the spout.

Teapots are often made of earthenware, because heat does not easily pass through it, and so the tea is kept hot. If the teapot is made of silver—take care! Silver allows heat to pass through very easily, and if you touch a silver pot full of hot tea you may burn yourself. Silver teapots have handles of ebonite. This does not let heat pass through easily and the hand is not burned.

You may also notice that an earthenware teapot is glazed. If the glaze were not there, tea would come oozing out through the sides. Sometimes pots are purposely made without glaze. In India, during hot weather, water is kept in unglazed pots, which are hung up where there is a draught. Water oozes out slowly, and as it comes out it dries up, and so keeps the water in the pot cool.

But in a teapot this is not wanted, and so the teapot is glazed. The glaze is hard and smooth like glass, and it does not allow liquid to pass through.

Perhaps you did not know there was so much to be found out about a teapot. Well, there is much more. When you have found out all you can by examining the teapot and thinking why it is made as it is, you may like to know how a teapot is made. If there is no pottery near by where you can see them being made, you can at any rate read about the process in books.



THE POTTER'S WHEEL; THE CLAY IS MODELLED ON THE REVOLVING DISC AT THE TOP.

There is another thing you can do. You can experiment in making earthenware, just as Robinson Crusoe did; and while you cannot expect very good results, even failures may be as interesting as successes if you think out why you failed.

It is just as well to put on your oldest clothes when working with clay. Begin by working up the clay with water into a smooth stiff paste. If the paste is too thin you cannot mould it. If it

THE REASON WHY



SOME EASY SHAPES TO MODEL IN CLAY.

is too stiff it is difficult to get rid of air bubbles. After a little practice, you will get the right stiffness.

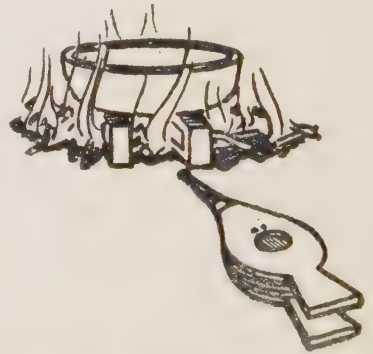
The clay may now be moulded into shapes. The simplest shape is a brick, and you may try your hand at brick-making. But most boys will want to make basins at least. You will find that it is not easy to get a good shape, and you may wonder how teapots are made so round. You will see the advantage of having a potter's wheel, which turns the clay while it is being moulded into shape.

With a revolving wheel the round shape is the easiest of all to fashion. Look at the shapes of china and earthenware things: you will understand why they are almost always round.

You can try the effect of heating one of your clay shapes in a fire. Choose a small one, so as not to waste much clay. You will find that the clay dries on the surface, and then pieces begin to come off in flakes. The reason is that the moisture below the surface turns to steam, and the steam forces the clay above outward. The remedy is to allow the clay to dry before heating it. The slower the drying the better. Put your basins under cover and leave them for a fortnight to get dry.

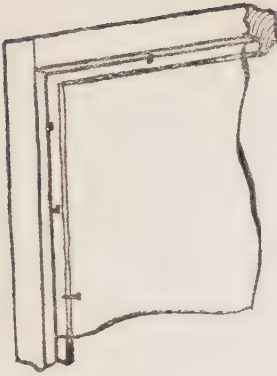
You are now ready to try your hand at burning the basins. One method is to build up a fire round the dry basins and to keep it burning for some hours. Let the fire go down slowly and leave the basins to cool. You may try the effect of cooling one quickly; and you will probably find that it breaks. The reason for this is that one part cools more quickly than another. The cooler part contracts, and so breaks away from the rest of the basin.

The longer you keep the fire going and the more slowly you allow the final cooling to take place, the more likely you are to get



STARTING THE FIRE. THE EMBERS BELOW MAY BE KEPT GLOWING BY USING BELLOWES.

THE REASON WHY



SMALL FLAT RIVETS ARE USED TO HOLD THE PANE WHILE THE PUTTY IS BEING PUT IN.

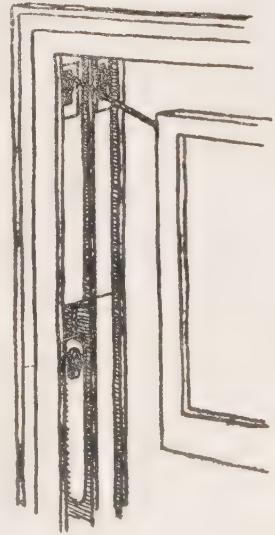
a good result. One plan is to cover the basins with glowing embers, and then to pile earth on top. Leave the uncovering till next day.

Your basins will not have very good shapes, and you will find that water soaks through them; but you will have learnt something at any rate about how pottery is made, and will be able to appreciate the difficulties that the pioneers of the craft had to overcome.

To go no farther than the room in which you live a great part of your life, here are a few things to think about. How is glass fixed in windows? It is no use saying "With putty." That does not help very much. It would not help you, for example, if you had to fix a pane in position. You should find out how the pane is held at both sides, how it is kept in place whilst the putty is being put on and whilst it is hardening. How is putty made? How is glass cut? How is it made the correct size and shape?

Windows slip up and down very easily. If there is any difficulty about it, there is something wrong with the window. Find out how the heavy weight of the window is made to move so easily.

Now try to draw a window without looking at it. If you attempt a careful drawing, which is the only kind of any use, you may find yourself in difficulties. Draw the window partly open. When you have finished, compare your drawing with the window and see how much you have missed. You will find that a window frame is just as full of purpose as a teapot or anything else. You will find two grooves for the window sashes to slide in, with cords attached to the sashes, passing over pulleys at the top of the window. Perhaps you have missed out the strip of wood on the outside at the top of the window. This is to keep out draughts at the top. Why is there no similar strip at the bottom?



ONE OF THE WEIGHTS THAT BALANCE WINDOW SASHES.

THE REASON WHY

Drawing from memory is a great help in showing you how little you know and how much there is to find out. You may think you know all about a thing ; you see it every day of your life ; you may use it every day ; of course you know all about it. Now try to draw it from memory. A rough drawing—very good. Now try to make a careful drawing. All sorts of little points are missed out or put in wrong. That is because you have not understood the reason why the thing is made exactly as it is made. You could not make one for yourself. If anything were wrong you could not put it right. You could not even find out what was wrong until you began to look for the reasons.

It is a good thing to make two memory drawings at least of anything you want to find out about. Make one drawing before you have examined the thing carefully. This will help you to see what there is to be found out. As you attempt to make the drawing you will find yourself asking questions. These are the questions you should try to answer by examining the thing. Finally, do not be satisfied till you have found a reason for everything. Now make your drawing again. Compare the drawing with the thing it is meant to represent. You will be able to see whether you have missed anything, whether you have misunderstood anything, and whether you have grasped the reasons why things are done in a particular way.

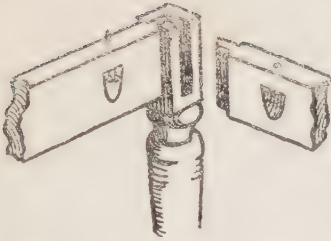
I asked several boys the question, "What is a table?" They laughed, but when they came to try to answer the question they found it a little difficult. The general notion was that a table is a flat top held up by legs. When we went on to think about making the table, the idea was that the legs were attached to the top, and that lengths of wood were afterwards added to make them steady. It would be possible to make a table in that way, indeed it is often done with toy tables, but they are never satisfactory. It is almost impossible to make the legs steady.



THE MOST INTERESTING PART OF A TABLE
IS UNDERNEATH.

The truth, from the maker's point of view, is that a table consists of the legs set firmly in a framework on which the top rests. The legs and the framework must be quite rigid before the top is put on, otherwise the table will never be

THE REASON WHY



THE LEGS ARE STRONGLY JOINTED TO THE FRAME, AND THE TABLE TOP IS SCREWED ON FROM BELOW.

steady. If the top were taken off a well-made table, the legs would be as steady as ever.

Turn a small table upside down and see how the legs are tightly fixed in the framework. The legs are jointed to the frame, and the wood of which the frame is made is cut as wide as possible, to afford a good hold. Sit down at the table and you will see that the frame could not conveniently be made any deeper, or you would not be able

to get your legs under it in comfort. You may also find that pieces of wood have been glued and screwed into the corners to strengthen the frame still further.

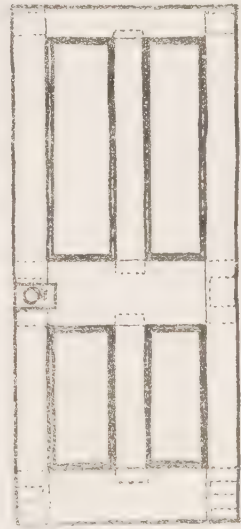
Examine the top of the table. The interesting thing here is something that you do not find. There are no screws in the upper surface of the table. The screwing on is done from below. Grooves are made in the frame with gouge and chisel not far from the upper edge, about an inch of the frame being left to hold the screws. Screws are then put through this thickness and half-way through the thickness of the table top.

The legs of a table usually taper downwards. Near the bottom they are thin and elegant. Near the top, however, they are thicker in order to allow room for the joints and also to give greater strength to this part.

Having found out how a table is made steady, you can now examine a chair. You will find it as full of interest and possibly surprises as the table.

A well-made door opens easily on its hinges; it fits the frame neatly so as to keep out draughts; and it slides easily over the floor. A badly made door does none of these things.

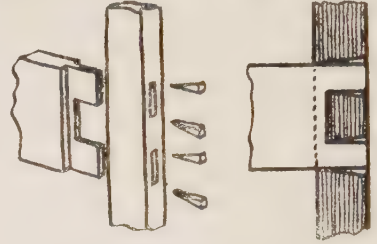
The difficulty to be overcome in making a door is to get a heavy flat surface that will not warp. A very little change in the shape will make the door jam, or will leave spaces between the door and the frame.



THE FRAME-WORK OF A DOOR, SHOWING HOW THE PARTS ARE JOINTED TOGETHER.

THE REASON WHY

Examine a door carefully. You will find that there are two upright parts at the outsides, and at least three cross-bars. It is the fixing together of these that is important and interesting. Climb on a chair and look at the upper edge of the door. You will find that the upper cross-bar is jointed into the upright at each side. It is the same with the other cross-bars. Now examine the outside edge of the door. You will find that part of each cross-bar comes right through the upright. You will find also that at the top and bottom of each of the parts that come through there is a tightly fitting wedge. When the door is being made, the uprights are hammered into place, and glued wedges are then driven in tightly. The wood of the upright is forced away slightly; the wedge is tightly glued to the cross-bar, and forms with this a joint that tapers inwards and so prevents the upright from pulling away from the cross-bars.



THE STRONG DOOR JOINT MADE BY HAMMERING IN GLUED WEDGES FROM THE OUTSIDE.

The hinges, especially on a very heavy door, are wide in order to give a large holding surface. A small point to notice in connection with the hinges is the way they are sunk to allow the door to be completely closed. The frame of a door also contains some interesting points, but these are left for you to find out.





The STUFFED TIGER

By Peter Blundell

I

THE leopard cannot change his spots, neither can the tiger change his stripes. Nor, according to Wiggins Minor, would Minns, his late contemporary at Addlem College, ever get out of his habit of bragging.

Wiggins Minor had talked of little else but Minns, to Jones, during their walk down from the bungalow to the Club. He seemed to think both Minns's conduct and his character perfectly disgusting. And now, on their walk back in the dazzling sunshine through the main street of their little Malay town, he was again addressing Jones on the subject of the faulty character of Minns.

"He was in our first eleven. Last year he made a hundred not out against Clifton. The way he used to yap about it afterwards was absolutely sickening. That's the sort of chap he is."

"Pretty good, though, a hundred against Clifton," hazarded Jones, a quiet, pimply-faced youth with an enormous admiration for his chum Wiggins.

"Mediumly good," allowed Wiggins. "But if I'd done it—and I've done as good more than once—I shouldn't have yapped about it day and night like he did."

THE STUFFED TIGER

He hit out viciously with his malacca stick, and a too inquisitive pariah dog ran back—yapping also—into the welter of thatched Malay huts from which it had proceeded.

Wiggins, grinning triumphantly at a passing Chinese coolie, lifted his topee and mopped a perspiring brow.

“Talk about being stewed alive!” he grumbled. “The sun’s absolutely sizzling.”

“I always feel like that after a curry tiffin at the Club,” commented Jones, imitating Wiggins’s example with the aid of a purple silk handkerchief. “And to think this is Christmas Eve!”

“I’m sorry now I asked that chap Minns to spend Christmas with us,” observed Wiggins thoughtfully. “It’s true he’s an old school chum, but, still, there are limits. When I think about him it makes me boil. I hope you’ll be able to stick his bragging, Jones. I shall have to, for I’m to be his host, and there are such things as the sacred laws of hospitality. If you feel inclined to kick him, what I say is, control your feelings.”

Jones smiled feebly.

“If he’s such a bounder, I may find him rather amusing,” he ventured. “Perhaps we shall be able to take a rise out of him.”

“If I’d seen that school mag. that came to-day before I sent my letter inviting him, I should have torn the letter up—absolutely and without hesitation,” asseverated Wiggins viciously.

“You thought the article pretty feeble, you said?” hazarded Jones.

“Feeble!” exclaimed Wiggins. “As regards pettifogging feebleness, it was the absolute limit. Listen to this for bilge,” he went on, quoting from the magazine in a piping tone of mockery. “‘Those who remember Frederick Minns, and many yet at the school will do so, will learn with admiration of a feat of shikari that falls to his credit. Minns, as most of us know, after leaving here went to the tropical dependency of Malaya to acquire the art of rubber-planting. He has been on his estate a bare six months, but already has become a notable tiger shot, and now last month he has slain, unaided, another man-eater. The natives there, we learn, look on him as their protector.’ Look upon him as their protector, we learn!” yelled Wiggins indignantly, smiting hard at another pariah dog, and missing badly. “Sorry, Jones!”

“It’s nothing,” said Jones, rubbing his shin. “Don’t mention it.”

“‘Look on him as their protector, we learn!’” said Wiggins again, with fierce sarcasm. “I know where they learnt that from. From

THE STUFFED TIGER

Minns himself. He's always blowing his own trumpet. As for tigers, I don't believe he has ever smelt one. I've never seen one, and I've been out here nearly a year. That is, except for the stuffed one in Ah Wong's shop."

A look of excitement suddenly appeared on Jones's pimply visage.

"I never knew Ah Wong had a stuffed tiger," he ejaculated.

"Not many people do," said Wiggins in a tone of some superiority.

"It's not everybody that Ah Wong lets become pally with him."

"You owe him fifty dollars, don't you?" asked Jones innocently.

Wiggins gave him a suspicious glance.

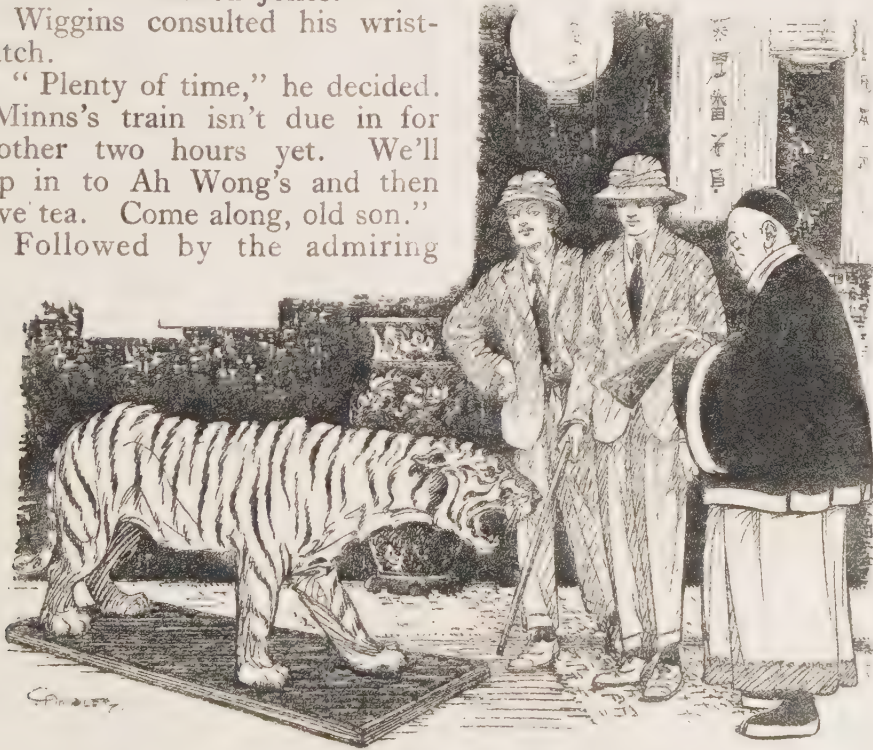
"What I owe Ah Wong makes no difference to our friendship," he said grandly. "I've been into his back shop more than once, and I've seen the tiger. Anyone I introduce to Ah Wong may see the tiger. He'll do anything for me. If you like I'll take you there to see it, too."

"Now?" asked Jones.

Wiggins consulted his wrist-watch.

"Plenty of time," he decided. "Minns's train isn't due in for another two hours yet. We'll hop in to Ah Wong's and then have tea. Come along, old son."

Followed by the admiring



"ME SHOOT HIM, TEN—NO, FIFTEEN YEAR AGO!" SAID AH WONG.

THE STUFFED TIGER

Jones, he strode across the sun-swept street and entered the shady *kedei* of Ah Wong.

What he had claimed appeared to be justified. The two young khaki-clad rubber planters were received like kings by Ah Wong in person ; and soon, after a passage between bales of goods and perspiring Chinese shop-assistants, they were in the presence of the stuffed tiger.

" Me shoot him, ten—no, fifteen year ago ! " said Ah Wong, his almond eyes glinting.

" You alle light," observed Wiggins patronisingly. " Velly good Chinaman. Plenty good shoot."

Ah Wong looked modest.

" Him big man-eater," he commented.

" Was he, though ! " said Jones in an awed voice. The attitude of the tiger, the gleam of the glass eyes in the lamplight, did indeed look man-eaterish.

" Rather fly-blown now, though," commented Wiggins disparagingly.

" Him what ? " asked Ah Wong.

" Moth-eaten. Second - hand - looking," explained Wiggins pleasantly.

The Chinaman smiled.

" I show him to plenty little boys," he told his listeners. " They plenty frightened."

" I shouldn't like to meet him on a dark night myself," admitted Jones.

" Rot ! " said Wiggins in a majestic tone, slapping the tiger's latter end carelessly with his malacca walking-stick.

" Nor would Minns—" began Jones. He stopped, gasped, then suddenly seized Wiggins by the biceps.

" I say—" he spluttered.

Wiggins shook himself free and bestowed on Jones an angry glare. Plainly he did not care to be seized by the biceps when in the presence of company.

" Look here," he whispered menacingly, " if you can't behave yourself, get out ! "

" I didn't mean——"

" Well, what were you going to say ? "

" I've a good mind not to tell you now," said Jones sulkily. " But

THE STUFFED TIGER

I was going to say, wouldn't it be a lark if we could hire the tiger and let Minns——"

"We'll get it from Ah Wong," interrupted Wiggins, speaking all in a breath, his eyes gleaming, "and stick it under some tree to-night and let Minns pot at it thinking it the real thing. What do you think of that for an idea?"

"Topping," admitted Jones. "But——"

"I always do get hold of good ideas," said Wiggins grandly. "Now if you'll be quiet and not interfere, and do just what I tell you, we'll have the finest rise out of Minns that anyone ever had out of anyone."

"It was me that had the idea first," said Jones complainingly.

"You!" said Wiggins in a contemptuous tone. "You never had an idea in your puff; you know that as well as I do. Now, then, you stand still here, and I'll talk the matter over privately with Ah Wong."

The Chinese towkay, who had stood aside while the two Englishmen conversed, plainly puzzled by their apparent excitement, went meekly over to the corner whither Wiggins beckoned him, and became at once engaged in earnest conversation. Or rather, in earnest listening, for most of the talking was done by Wiggins.

Wiggins, Jones saw plainly, was having a difficult time. His effort to convince the Chinaman that he must have the tiger was testing his personal magnetism to the n'th degree. His carroty hair stood on end, and his ruddy face had become suffused with perspiration. Finally, having smitten the palm of his left hand with his right fist twice, he advanced, his little blue eyes gleaming ferociously, and threatened the obsequious Chinaman with his malacca stick.

That last action apparently did the trick. Wiggins Minor came back to Jones, a smile of triumph on his face.

"I've squared Ah Wong," he announced. "He says he will tell his men to get a cart at once, and take the tiger up to the wood at the back of our bungalow. We've another hour and a half yet before Minns is due, and if we hurry we'll have everything pretty well ready for him. I'll tell you the rest as we go along."

"Good," said Jones enthusiastically. "Excellent! Top hole! Couldn't be better——"

"Got any money with you?" asked Wiggins abruptly.

Jones's face fell equally abruptly.

"Wh-a-a-a——" he gasped.

THE STUFFED TIGER

"Money," exclaimed Wiggins sternly. "We must have some. No, don't say you haven't, because I know you've just drawn your pay. Out with it!"

"What do you want it for?" demanded Jones suspiciously.

"What do I want it for?" echoed Wiggins Minor, slapping the tiger on its latter end again with great ferocity. "Why, to give to Ah Wong, of course, you silly juggins. He won't let us have the tiger unless we pay a hundred dollars deposit. Come on, now, out with it!"

"But——" began Jones protestingly.

"You'll get it back again, if that's what you're afraid of, you miserable miser," explained Wiggins abusively.

"Look here, what do you mean by calling me a miser?" barked Jones in a hectic tone. "Why don't you shell out yourself?"

Wiggins fixed him with the stare of a gorgon.

"Are you going to hand it over or are you not?" he demanded.

"No humming and hawing now. Humming and hawing isn't any good to me. And, anyhow, it is your plan we're going to carry out. At least, so you claim. Wad you mean by leading me into the business and then trying to back out, eh?"

"I'm not trying to back out!" said Jones, with heat.

"I thought you were a sport," continued Wiggins in a different tone. "Ah, that's more like," he added, as Jones, touched on a tender point—he was a fellow who would have done anything rather than be considered unsporting—got out his pocket-book. "Make it a hundred and twenty while you are about it."

"A hundred!" said Jones huskily, as with trembling fingers he counted out the notes.

"I don't care to a dollar or two how much it is," said Wiggins.

Shrugging his shoulders majestically, he took the notes and handed them over to Ah Wong, who scribbled with his paint-brush a receipt in Chinese, gave it to Jones, and left the shop to summon his men.

The Chinese are reputed to be bad organisers, but it seemed to the dazed Jones scarcely any time before he and Wiggins, with the stuffed tiger and four Chinamen, were driving in a covered bullock waggon through the late afternoon sunshine on their way to the wood at the back of the bungalow. The main street of the small town was full of Malays, Indians, and Chinese tin-miners returning from work. These people in their Oriental setting of thatched huts, coco-nut palms, white-washed shops, and peak-roofed, red-tiled dwellings, formed a mixed

THE STUFFED TIGER

assembly interesting enough. But Jones eyed the scene listlessly. Scenery never did appeal to him much, especially when viewed from the floor of a bullock waggon. Also, he was perturbed inwardly, having pressing doubts whether he would ever see that hundred dollars of his again. He knew Wiggins Minor intimately and regarded him on the whole with respect and affection. But, as a financier, Wiggins was—well, weak. The six months they had spent together in the bungalow had taught Jones that any money that Wiggins Minor had the handling of disappeared with a celerity akin to the miraculous.

It was well enough for Jones to tell himself, as he was doing now, that Ah Wong's receipt, which he clutched in his coat pocket, was as good as a hundred dollars any day in the week. Or rather it would have been well enough had he believed it. But he knew Wiggins, and also he had his suspicions of Ah Wong.

"Wish to goodness I'd never heard of the stuffed tiger!" muttered Jones in his corner.

How the beast glared in the semi-darkness of the jolting waggon. And, heavens, its smell! Tigers, Jones was aware, have an odour of carrion. This one had it still, although all these years dead. In addition, it had acquired a distinct aroma of rag-and-bone shop.

Wiggins and Ah Wong were seated in the front of the tent, monopolising all the fresh air, and conversing cheerfully. Since annexing Jones's hundred dollars they had taken absolutely no notice of him.

In the body of the van, beside Jones and the tiger, sprawled three Chinese coolies, naked to the waist. They, also, it seemed to Jones, smelt of carrion and rag-and-bone shop. They conversed in a guttural undertone and, Jones thought, behaved much more like beasts than the tiger. One of them held in his arms a nanny-goat, another its kid. The kid bleated continuously. It was on the whole the biggest nuisance in the waggon—that is, Jones now thought it was. At first he had considered the nanny "took the biscuit" in this respect, but that was at the beginning of the journey, when the silly animal mistook Jones's hand for a clump of grass and tried to have supper off it.

What Wiggins meant by bringing all this menagerie with him he had not so far deigned to explain.

The explanation came quickly enough, however, when the bullock waggon, jolting over rough country roads through the rapidly deepening twilight, arrived at its destination.

THE STUFFED TIGER

Within the wood it was already quite gloomy. Wiggins leapt down from the bullock waggon, and at once assumed charge of affairs.

"Tell your men to stand the tiger here, Ah Wong," he directed, looking about him with a considering eye. "And—let me see—Jones, you'd better hold that nanny-goat."

Jones got stiffly down from the bullock waggon and did as directed. It was, he thought, a menial, unimportant task, that of holding a nanny-goat, but as a one-time Boy Scout he knew the value of obedience. He knew also that Wiggins Minor was a born leader. It was impossible, even now he had annexed that hundred dollars, not to admire the incisive way in which he issued his commands.

"Move that tiger a little more round to the left! No, no, Ah Wong, that too muchee! Makee him look down glade towards bungalow. That alle light, Ah Wong!"

The Chinaman and his assistants, their task nearly completed, drew aside grinning. Standing solitary at the edge of a pile of rock, with the dark woodland all round it, the tiger looked so savagely impressive that Jones caught himself shivering.

"Now, then, Jones," directed Wiggins, "wake up, and for Heaven's sake take some interest in what's going on! Hold the nanny's head. The Chinamen are going to tie its feet!"

Jones eagerly did as he was bidden. The goat, bleating vigorously, was laid underneath the stuffed tiger, and bound securely to a stake which the handiest of the Chinamen cut from a tree and knocked into the ground. The pair of animals formed a realistic picture. It was a picture of a tiger which had apparently just seized its prey and was having a good look round before starting supper, with a view to acquiring, if possible, a second course.

Wiggins approached Jones.

"How's that for high?" he demanded, waving his hand at the goat.

"Splendid!" cried Jones generously. "Magnificent! Absolutely topping! I say, won't Minns be sold!"

Wiggins Minor nodded.

"He will, if you play your part well," he remarked.

Jones smiled.

"Oh, I shall play that all right," he said confidently.

Wiggins gave him a patronising nod. Then grinned.

"Well, I hope you play it better than you play the piano, that's all,"

THE STUFFED TIGER

he observed rudely. "You can't play the piano for nuts, you know. Ah Wong," he called out, "you makee tiger number one chop. Alle light. Job finish. Mr. Jones watchee tiger. Let him hold the kid."

"Hold the kid!" muttered the mystified Jones. "Look here, Wiggins, I don't understand. What have I got to hold the kid for?"

"I'll tell you when you're holding it," said Wiggins. Minor as a dirty Chinese came forward and thrust the bleating kid into Jones's unwilling arms. "Got it? That's right. What are you afraid of? It won't bite you. Now, don't let it go whatever you do."

"But wha-a—look here——" began Jones.

"What you've got to do is quite easy," went on Wiggins. "Any kid, even an infant in arms, could do it. But not perhaps as well as you," he added patronisingly. "Come this way."

He took the unfortunate Jones by the arm and led him and the bleating kid to a big rock. In the dim twilight a small black cavern was revealed.

"Your job," explained Wiggins, with the air of a field-marshal, "is to crawl at once into that hole, and when you've got there, wait, keep your eye on the tiger, and——"



HE TOOK THE UNFORTUNATE JONES BY THE ARM AND LED HIM AND THE BLEATING KID TO A BIG ROCK.

THE STUFFED TIGER

"But look here!" expostulated Jones, eyeing the cavern with marked disfavour, "couldn't——"

"Am I running this show or are you?" demanded Wiggins explosively.

"You are," admitted Jones. "But—er—couldn't one of the Chinamen stay and keep an eye on the tiger?"

"Wouldn't trust 'em," said Wiggins firmly. "It's too important. Holding that kid is a white man's job. While you wait there, holding that kid and keeping an eye on the tiger to see that nobody steals it, I hop down to the station, meet Minns, drive him up to the bungalow. That's my plan. See?"

Jones nodded dismally.

"After we've had dinner——"

"After you've had dinner!" echoed Jones indignantly. "And do you mean to say that I've got to wait in that beastly hole, with the kid, till you and Minns have had dinner?"

"Certainly," stated Wiggins Minor. "Must get Minns into the right frame of mind with a good dinner. We shan't be more than two hours—three at the outside. A real sportsman thinks nothing of sitting on a tree for a whole week waiting for a tiger."

"But not without having dinner," pointed out Jones, in a plaintive tone.

Wiggins shrugged his shoulders.

"Oh, well, if you're going to funk it," he said witheringly, "I may as well give up the job. But I must say I thought you more of a sport. I didn't know you were afraid of being left alone in the dark."

"I'm no such thing," said Jones hotly, between the bleatings of the kid.

"Being afraid's the only thing that stops you. It must be," said Wiggins Minor. "Now, are you going to be a sport, or are you going to show the white feather? Out with it and no shilly-shallying."

Jones hesitated.

"Oh, well, if it has to be done," he muttered sulkily, "I suppose I must do it. Only you seem to be taking the easy end of the stick, as usual."

"No, I'm not," contradicted Wiggins Minor. "I've got all the acting to do. I've got to deceive Minns. Anyhow, he's my friend and he's coming to stay with me. He doesn't even know of your existence."

THE STUFFED TIGER

"So how you could take my place I don't know. B. sensible, Jones! Be a man!"

Jones bowed his head. Fate was against him once more. Wiggins's arguments were conclusive. Plainly he was the man marked out to sit in the hole. He crawled in with an effort, nearly tearing the clothes off his back in the process, and Wiggins thrust the kid in after him.

"Now, then," he said hoarsely, "always merry and bright! I'm off to meet Minns. When, later on, you see him and me stealing up the glade, pinch the kid hard and make it yell. Then the nanny will start bleating and Minns will shoot the tiger. Leave all the rest to me. Understand?"

Jones nodded gloomily. With a sinking feeling he observed Wiggins scurrying off towards the bungalow. The Chinese, headed by Ah Wong, got into their bullock cart, which lumbered away.

Jones was now alone in the jungle.

Not exactly alone, however, for the nanny and her kid were present also. For a while they were particularly noisy company. But when the cicadæ began to shrill and the wah-wah monkeys to cry out in the surrounding hills, their plaintive bleating died away. And as the light from the rising moon first stole up the glade, every living thing was still as if asleep. No, not quite still. There were unaccountable rustlings in the tree-tops, the rush of wings of the bats as they flew below the trees, the distant bark of a deer, the crash of bushes as a wild pig nosed its way towards the water. And always, steadily, the ping ping of the mosquitoes.

These sounds by no means lulled Jones into slumber. As Wiggins seemed to have suspected, he hated to be alone in the dark. Nervous as he was by nature, darkness always gave him a chilly feeling about the spine. Now in this damp and dismal jungle his sensations were particularly unpleasant. Every bat that came along looked about the size of a vampire. A toad that crawled up the hole and sat for an instant on the back of his neck almost turned him into a raving maniac. The toad got away in time. So did a large spider that settled on the same place. Jones, flinging a vengeful glance after it as it sprinted out of the hole, perceived again the tiger, which the moonlight had just crept up to and illuminated. Never did a stuffed beast look more absolutely lifelike. It seemed to Jones something more than an ordinary stuffed tiger. It looked a gigantic tiger, a sort of super-tiger. And its odour was also of a large dimension. Even at that distance Jones could detect it.

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Shuddering, he stared at the brute with wide-open eyes, noted the goat asleep below it, turned frenziedly as he heard the creaking of a twig on his right, and then, giving an enormous sigh of relief as he beheld two khaki-clad figures creeping through the moonlight, began feverishly to pinch the kid. . . .

II

So much for the worried holder of the heavy end of the stick. Now to return to Wiggins Minor. He was observed by the railway porters to drive up magnificently in his buggy to the station just as the train arrived, fling the reins to his syce, and swagger on to the platform in time to welcome a stockily-built youth in khaki who had been one of the passengers.

"I should have known you anywhere!" the porters heard him cry effusively, holding out his hand.

"That you, Wig?" said the youth phlegmatically. "Howdy?"

The two climbed into the buggy. The newcomer's Malay servant put gun-cases and suit-case in behind them.

"You're no end of a hand with tigers," said Wiggins, after the first interchange of inquiries about health and so on was over. "Brought your guns, I see. Good man! I've been reading about you in the school mag."

"Too bad of the Head to put it in," said Minns. "I believe he got the information from my uncle. They're friends, you know. I don't suppose you've got any tiger about here though."

"Haven't we!" said Wiggins readily. "Haven't we, indeed! There are dozens! There's one in the wood at the back of my bungalow every night. You ought to hear him roaring."

"You don't say so!"

"I do, sir! He roars like thunder! The natives tell me he's a man-eater. They've asked me to kill him. But I knew you were fond of tiger-shooting, so I've saved him for you. We're going to have a preliminary look round to-morrow."

After dinner they were still talking about the tiger. By this time Wiggins Minor was absolutely certain it was a man-eater. Indeed, he had enumerated the natives it had carried off. Minns, himself, was indignant that such a beast had been allowed to roam so long unmolested.

THE STUFFED TIGER

"You mean to say that none of the Government people have been after it?" he asked.

"All the Government people have got the wind up," asseverated Wiggins calmly. "You see, we haven't any elephants hereabouts trained for tiger-shooting. One or two men have tried sitting up for it in trees, but without success. The beast's too wary for them."

"And you say it's in the wood at the back of your house every night?"

"Every blessed night," said Wiggins. "It's almost certainly there now. Hold on a minute!" he cried in pretended alarm as Minns got up and went to open one of his gun-cases. "I'm not going to go out there in the dark."

"Neither am I," said Minns calmly. "But I bet if I sit up for it to-morrow night I'll get it. I see I did bring some explosive bullets," he added. "They're just the thing for a man-eater."

"You'll never get it by sitting up," answered Wiggins impressively. "That tiger will fall to the man that tackles it on foot, as the Sultan of Johore tackles his. I tell you what we might do though," he added. "We might take advantage of the moonlight and stroll over to some rocks I know of in the glade. We could sit there pretty safely for an hour or two, and if Mr. Stripes comes along we might pot him. Are you game?"

Minns shook his head.

"A little bit too risky for me."

"Not it," said Wiggins. "There's no risk at all. What, you don't mean to say you—— But I thought you were a tiger-slayer!"

"I don't tackle man-eaters by moonlight, though."

Wiggins sighed ostentatiously.

"Well, I'm game anyhow," he said, with emphasis. "But I suppose discretion is the better part of valour. You'd feel safer on an elephant, eh, Minns? Well, well."

"If you think I'm afraid, you're jolly well mistaken," said Minns, with some heat.

"Afraid?" said Wiggins. "Oh no, not at all. Cautious, Minns, merely cautious. Tell you what I'll do," he added. "I'll bet you an even fifty dollars you haven't pluck enough to go with me to the rocks I mentioned and, if you see a tiger, stay and plug it."

"I'll take you," said Minns like lightning.

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"Then we'll go at once," declared Wiggins Minor. "Boy," he roared to his Chinese servant, "bring my gun!"

Thus it happened that ten minutes later two sportsmen, rifles in hand, were to be seen stealing, as has been mentioned already, up the moonlit glade. . . .

Somewhere in the darkness a kid began to bleat desperately! So suddenly did the sound break the silence that even the bold Wiggins paused.

"Sounds like a kid in distress," he remarked in a hoarse whisper.

"And there's the nanny answering it," whispered Minns in a slightly tremulous voice. Good heavens! Down, for your life!"

The stuffed tiger, looking supernaturally big, had loomed up in the moonlight.

Minns knelt and, with remarkable coolness, rested his rifle on a rock and took deliberate aim. He looked in fact as though he might hit the tiger. It occurred suddenly to Wiggins that an explosive bullet would do some damage. So he jogged Minns's elbow. Just in time!

"What the——!" hissed Minns, astonished. He glanced up furiously. The grin on the face of Wiggins Minor was apparent even in the moonlight.

"You—you mustn't shoot that tiger," giggled Wiggins. "It's a—tame one."

"Tame one!" echoed Minns.

"Yes," said Wiggins, giggling louder than ever. "It wouldn't hurt a fly. Answers to the name of Stuff. Come along and I'll introduce you to it."

The mystified Minns rose.

"Look here," he hissed angrily, "is this a joke, Wiggins?"

"No!" said Wiggins promptly—and with remarkable truthfulness; "it's a tiger—oh, Lord!"

This last exclamation ended in a howl of dismay as a monstrous striped thing leapt from some scrub right on to the stuffed tiger, and with magic quickness began to tear it to pieces. The roar with which the newcomer accompanied this dastardly operation was terrible and unmistakable—a coughing roar, loud as thunder.

It *was* a tiger!

Promptly dropping his rifle, Wiggins Minor stared in frozen horror at the apparition. Goat and kid were bleating loudly. The whole



Minns knelt, rested his rifle on a rock and took deliberate aim

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jungle was in an uproar ; and, drowning all, came a series of dismal howls from the cavern where the sporting Jones lay concealed.

And Minns shot that tiger ! Yes, he put a couple of explosive bullets in it just as it was about to eat the goat.

He was splendid, was Minns, magnificently cool and collected.

" Didn't I hear somebody howling just now ? " he asked, coming back to the dumbfounded Wiggins after putting the tiger out of its agony with a third shot through the head.

" Yes—now—er—um ! " stuttered the dumbfounded Wiggins.

" How did that stuffed tiger come to be there ? " demanded Minns.

Then, angrily, as a melancholy-looking, bedraggled object, holding a bleating kid, staggered into the open : " Who is this ? "

" I'm Jones," the object mumbled. " I say, Wiggins, you'll have to pay for that stuffed tiger. You put it there."

At the threat the stupefied Wiggins recovered slightly.

" I'll do no such thing ! " he declared, with heat.

Minns wheeled round.

" So you put that stuffed tiger there, did you ! " he shouted. " In order to make a fool of me, I suppose ? "

" Well," stuttered Wiggins defensively, " you shouldn't swank so."

" You miserable worm ! " hissed Minns. " You utterly unendurable reptile ! I'll teach you to risk people's lives and to try and make a fool of me. Down on your knees now ! "

He raised his rifle menacingly. Wiggins Minor, in abject fear, promptly obeyed orders.

Minns drew a knife from his belt and flung it at him.

" Crawl over there at once," he ordered, " and skin that tiger ! "

" Wha-a-a ! " mumbled Wiggins in feeble astonishment.

" Skin that tiger, I said. Do you hear ? And you, Jones, give him a hand. Smart now ! I'll teach you chaps to make a fool of me."

Yes, he was cool, was Minns. But in the moonlight his eye glittered devilishly, and his rifle looked as though it might go off accidentally at any moment.

So Wiggins Minor and Jones crawled over and skinned the tiger. It was an ancient, mangy, toothless creature, probably deaf. And it smelt horrible. So did Wiggins and Jones before they had finished the job.

Minns, saying that their smell was so horrible that he couldn't possibly stay in their bungalow, made them carry the tiger skin for him

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down to the hotel. Their arrival created quite a sensation. They crawled home still smelling strongly of tiger and, refusing dinner, scrubbed themselves and went to bed. They both felt extremely ill.

They felt iller still when the next number of the school magazine came out, with the following account of the exploit :

“ Our readers will be delighted to learn that Frederick Minns, whom most of us remember, has figured as hero in yet another tiger adventure in the Federated Malay States. It appears that as he was strolling in a wood with Wiggins Minor, who, it will be recollected, ornamented our fourth form for a number of years, a tiger attacked a goat. Minns promptly put three bullets into the beast, Wiggins Minor, meanwhile, enacting the part of spectator—a rôle which, it will be recollected, he always filled admirably. Apparently the shooting was consequent on an attempt to play a practical joke on Minns, an attempt which involved those concerned in the drollest of disasters. We fancy Wiggins Minor and his friend Jones will not go tiger-shooting again ! ”

“ Caddish, I call it,” said Jones, after Wiggins, in a choked voice, had read the paragraph aloud. “ He’s an awful ass, Minns ! Can’t help advertising himself ! I say, I hear that Ah Wong is going to sue us for that 350 dollars he says we owe him for the stuffed tiger. He has sent in the bill again and I see has actually the cheek to charge interest. Here it is.”

With frowning brow Wiggins Minor bent and examined the yellow slip of paper Jones handed him. The bill ran as follows :

To one stuffed tiger eaten by real do.	..	..	450	dollars.
Three months’ interest on above stuffed tiger	..	..	5	..
			—	
			455	..
Less cash by Mr. Jones Esquire	..	..	100	..
			—	
Grand Total due	..	..	355	..

“ What are we going to do about it ? ” asked Jones anxiously when Wiggins Minor raised his head.

“ Pay it, I suppose. That’s all we can do,” groaned Wiggins Minor miserably.



By
Richard Bird



I

"**I** SAY, pater!" said George Jeffreys on the first day of the Christmas holidays, "you remember I asked you for a motor-bike about a year ago?"

"Nine months ago," corrected his father, with a twinkle. "Yes; and I remember saying 'No.' What about it?"

"Any good asking again? I'm going on for seventeen."

"I got your report from Dipcote this morning," observed Jeffreys *père*, with apparent irrelevance.

"Oh!" said George, without much interest. His reports were usually colourless, but had never occasioned family jars. "What was it like?"

"So—so. Here it is!" and he handed it over.

"Much as usual," commented George after a brief scrutiny. "Final place, about the middle. Mellish says I'm not bad, but could do better."

"Read the exams percentage."

"Latin, 53 per cent. Greek, 48. French, 71. English, 69. Maths, 31. Total 272."

"Out of a maximum of 500."

"Yes. Maths are bad—I'm no good at Maths."

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"Quite. But you're good at languages, or *could* be—considering you're clever."

George flushed at the compliment.

"I say, pater! D'you think I'm clever?"

"Sure of it. But I agree with Mr. Mellish. Don't you?"

"Perhaps," admitted George. "Still, it works out that I get a bit over 50 per cent. That's not so bad."

"Not for a dull boy. It is for you."

Young Jeffreys was silent, knowing that his father was right. George was clever, but content to do just enough work to scrape through. Mr. Jeffreys observed him quietly and then resumed:

"See here, George!" he said. "We're good pals—always have been—and I'm not going to rag you unduly. Any fool can slack if he wants to, and he doesn't realise the consequences till later. Instead of pi-jawing, I'm going to offer you a prize. Nine months ago I refused you a motor-bike, because I don't believe in giving fat gifts too early. But I'll make you an offer now: I'll give you the best bike on the market as soon as you earn it. The maximum exam marks are 500. When you can show me 400 the bike's yours."

"Four hundred! But I only got 272 in this last report."

"Quite. But if you choose to work, I think you'd get 400 at Easter."

"But, pater! Manders—top of the form—got under 400!"

"All the same I believe you could do it."

"But my Maths are so rotten!"

"True, but you can work them up. Your other subjects are good. They'll give you a margin to play with, if you work."

"But 400 out of 500! That's—let's see—that's 80 per cent.!"

"Your Maths are coming on," smiled Mr. Jeffreys. "It is 80 per cent. And I believe you can do it. Are you on?"

"Rather!" said George, breathing deeply. It was a tough proposition, but must be attempted. Three months' hard grind was a small price for a motor-bike and prospective jaunts with his chum Swanston, who had just been given a beauty. "Rather! Thanks most awfully!"

"Remember, George, it's a business bargain, and I shall stick rigidly to the pound of flesh. No good saying, 'I came within 10 of the 400—won't that do?' It must be 400 or over. Understand?"

"Rather!"

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"Don't spec. too much. I believe you can do it, though you may not succeed first shot. But the bargain is a strict bargain."

"I understand, pater. And I'll have a shot."

On thinking over his father's sporting offer, George began to realise that it would entail considerable personal discomfort. Three months' grind was pretty stiff, but well worth a bike. But if he failed first time, he would be doomed to swot all the summer term. Suppose by some freak of fate, he even failed at the end of July, and had to toil through the Christmas term! Would he have the strength to endure a whole year's agony of work? The prospect caused instinctive recoil—disgust—panic. Then his vivid optimism foresaw the purchase of "the best on the market," and happy tours with Swanston. Oh yes! It must be tried at all costs!

"Swanny, old man!" he announced in the study on the first night of the Easter term, "I'm going to turn over a new leaf and work. Listen!" He explained the scheme for winning the promised prize.

"Hot stuff!" declared Swanston. "You'll do it if you stick in. And I'll back you up."

"How?"

"Whenever you feel like slacking, I'll tell you all about my motor-bike—how she takes hills in her stride—the times I've had——"

"Good scheme," agreed Jeffreys. "I expect you're aching to get it off your chest, anyhow."

"I am," admitted Swanston. "I tell you, the first day I wheeled her out of the shop all spick and span——"

The description flowed on for twenty minutes. Then Jeffreys, getting up with a sigh of appreciation, announced that he must start work. Swanston stared, open-mouthed.

"The first night of term!"

"Yes," said George, with gloomy determination. "I'm out to win. Give me a leg-up! I bet I'll need it!"

"You don't expect me to swot with you?" asked Swanston, apologetically. "I'll sit quiet, or toddle off, if you like——"

George reassured him. Personal toil was not required. Merely peace, sympathy, and occasional pæans on his bike when spirits flagged—that was the programme.

"Right-oh!" agreed Swanston. "But I think I'll wander off just now. Rodgers is keen on motors—I think I'll go and tell the tale to him for a bit, while you work."

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"Good enough," said George, with heroic abnegation, and got out his Algebra.

He worked steadily and hard for an hour and a half. Then, feeling that he was understudying the part of an early martyr, he considered himself with approval and decided that he might allow George a holiday. Bursting with new virtue, he joined himself to a throng of kindred spirits, who welcomed him with cries of approval and diluted pessimism. Swanston had paved the way for him by announcing the scheme and the New Leaf that was to be turned over. The general attitude was friendly but discouraging. Everybody wished him luck; nobody thought he could keep it up for a term, let alone two or three.

"Crafty chap, your pater," said Rodgers. "He knows you won't do it under a year—just a plan to make you get into the habit of swotting."

"Possibly," yawned Jeffreys. "Don't blame him if he does. But I bet I'll have that bike before a year is out."

"Is it really to be a New Leaf?" queried James, of the Sixth. "If so, you'll have your work cut out. No more breaking bounds—no more help with a con. from a pal—work on your own to *learn* something, instead of just scraping through, is a tough business. Believe me—I've had some."

"I know that," said Jeffreys quietly. "I know I'm going to have a dog's life for a time. But I'm going to put it through."

The crowd laughed, applauded, and wished him success. Then, heedless of the Great Resolve in Jeffrey's heart, they passed to other subjects—skating, pantomimes, motor-biking. On the last enthralling topic Swanston expatiated without let or hindrance.

Good resolutions are praiseworthy and frequent. Some are kept. The majority are partially kept. Some, like old soldiers, never die, but just fade away. Jeffreys's resolve was kept, almost to the letter. Partly it was due to pride—a stubborn determination not to let himself down after a public announcement—but chiefly because the prize was so ardently desired and so imminent. Instead of slacking, both in school and out, for the whole of that Easter term he really worked hard, very hard, striving to learn his lessons, to understand them, and to repair the weak spots. But he was sensible in his swotting. He took no less exercise than before, and gratified himself exceedingly by getting the last cap in the First XV. He did not sit up late at night stewing. One addition to official hours he did make—getting up

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three-quarters of an hour earlier each morning to swot, though he allowed himself the usual luxury of a lie-in on Sundays. Apart from this daily thorn he just observed the usual school hours, including prep. But he *worked* in those periods, even abstaining from the old-time "brews" in prep. hours. Swanston backed him up loyally, recognising the worthiness of the aim and the greatness of the prize.

There were few backslidings that term. After all, Easter was not so very far away—the weather was bad—footer petering out—the sports-training not so interesting. Temptations to slack were not so abundant, and it was the beginning of things. Four or five times George's spirits rebelled against the unbent bow, and he took a night off. Then Swanston would weigh in with a panegyric on his own bike and exploits. Jeffreys would listen in gloomy repentance. It always ended in a triumph for virtue. George always made up the hours—the self-appointed hours—he had missed. He stuck it out. A hero !

And at last Easter came, and the examinations. George went in with a hopeful heart, fairly confident, but not too confident. The marks were announced on the day he left for home. He had done extremely well, coming out fifth in the order. But he had not reached the desired goal ; his marks were only 363.

"Bad luck, old man," said Swanston, with fervent brevity. "I'm awfully sorry."

"Better luck next time," returned Jeffreys, with a smile that gave nothing away. "I know now what I can do, and I bet I'll have the bike for the summer."

He was feeling the disappointment pretty badly, but would not allow himself to give a sign to the world. To his father his attitude must be the same. They had signed a joint treaty—a business arrangement—they were pals. No whining. A sound programme, but, after three months' sincere effort, it needed stamina. George had it.

His father met him with the motor.

"Any luck, George?" were almost his first words of greeting. "What about the marks?"

"Three hundred and sixty-three, Dad," said the son, with cheerful stoicism. "Missed it by 37. But I'm fifth in the order."

"Stout fellow!" returned the elder. "You'll do it all right before long. Worked hard, eh?"

"Rather!" said George, with feeling.

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"I'm glad. You must have, to have got 363. Well, to mark my appreciation, your holiday money shall be a fiver instead of the usual Easter two."

"Thanks awfully," said George, with genuine appreciation. He had not expected a consolation prize. Their bargain was a bargain, to be observed literally. Though his father was generous and understanding, he was just and a man of his word. Decent of him to try to soften the blow a bit, and say so little. Oh, a good sort! More than ever must he take things smiling and prove he was as good at bargain-keeping as another. And that unlooked-for extra three quid would come in very handy now that he was getting keen on wireless.

It was a cheery vac., though motor-bikeless. George enjoyed every moment of it, and apparently his father did not find it dull. They spent it largely together, doing a little motoring in their touring-car and a lot of golf. When it came to an end George went back to Dipcote in sunny mood, full of health and spirits, and determined to make things sure this term, at least. It would be a bore having to sweat in the summer term, if the weather was anything like decent, but it would have to be done. That motor-bike seemed more desirable than ever now that the days were lengthening and the roads getting drier and more tempting every hour.

"Same bargain on my side," were the senior's parting words. "Still on, I suppose?"

"Rather! Same programme on mine," smiled George. "Good-bye, Dad! Keep your pecker up, and begin to save up to meet the exes. at the end of August."

"Don't spec.!" was the final advice from the platform. "Cup and lip, you know—and our bargain is a strictly literal affair!"

"Rather!" And the train moved off, while George sat counting his chickens and "specking" for all he was worth. He had some reason. The swotting had been carried through successfully for one term. He knew now what he had to face, and knew that he was capable of carrying it through. Also, as grown-ups sometimes find out in other things, he discovered that a thing faced is a thing beaten. Its terrors diminish with extraordinary speed. It would be idle to pretend that George after a term's toil had become an earnest student. He had not. He was toiling for a definite object for a definite period, and he meant to slack off when successful. Perhaps not be *quite* so slack—after all, the time did pass quicker when he tried to get interested

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in his work—but certainly he would not work as he was doing now, heart and soul, body and brains. He meant his programme to be precisely the same as before; but he recognised that it would be harder to keep his nose to the grindstone during summer weather. Fervently he begged Swanston that night to keep him up to the mark if he showed signs of easing off.

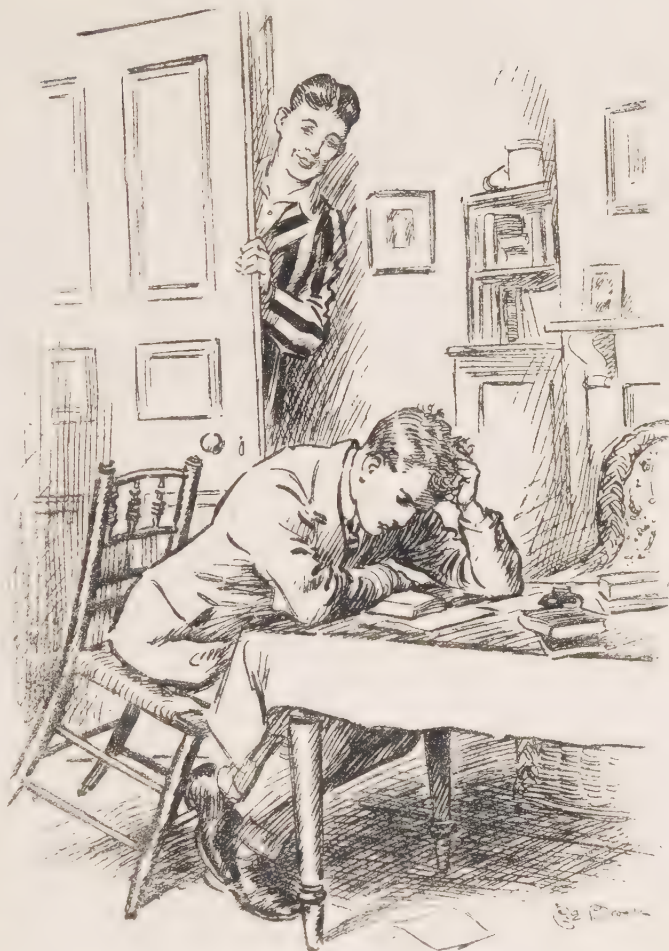
“Like a bird, old man!” was the cheery response. “I mean to do the John o’ Groats to Land’s End trip in August. If I could have you with me it would be great.”

“Top-hole!” agreed George.

“Got a map on you? Let’s look out the route and go over it together now!”

“After you’ve done your prep.,” said Swanston, amazingly virtuous on another’s behalf. “I’ll go and have a yarn with James and come back in an hour’s time. Eh?”

“An hour and a half,” corrected George, with a determined growl. With extraordinary disgust he took a geometry from the shelf, and grimly



HE TOOK A GEOMETRY FROM THE SHELF, AND GRIMLY SAT DOWN.

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sat down. Swanston, beaming like a happy pedagogue at a favourite pupil's success in a scholarship exam, left the room with a blithe heart.

Over the term it is not meet to linger. The summer that year was really summer, hot and splendid. Jeffreys was a cricketer to his finger-tips and fighting for a place in the Eleven. He played several times for Dipcote First, but was not successful in getting his colours. Still, he enjoyed the cricket—every hour of it—and his backslidings in the matter of swotting were more numerous than during the Easter term. It was not to be wondered at. The persistent pursuit of ideals is strengthening, no doubt, to the character, but occasionally exhausting. One ought not to cavil at a dozen—or even twenty—lapses from grace under the circumstances. And when one records that every lapse was atoned for by George getting up earlier next morning and making good the lost time, criticism is unworthy. Briefly, though more than once Swanston had an anxious time, and found all his descriptive powers necessary to hymn the joys of motor-biking and the perils of slacking off in the last lap, George Jeffreys won through. He put in a thoroughly good and conscientious term's work until 21st July. Then, two days before the exams began, he went to the San. with a temperature. It proved to be scarlet fever.

II

BAD luck is annoying under any circumstances. But when one has devoted some six months to unfamiliar and distasteful swotting—is on the point of grasping the due reward of toil—and then is "outed" by a peculiarly malignant stroke of Fate, unexpected and undeserved, there is some excuse for grumbles. On the other hand, the severest backhanders of the fickle goddess numb by their own rigours. Jeffreys had plenty of grit in his constitution, but the keenness of the disappointment lent its own stiffening. When his father uttered a word of cheer to the convalescent, he only answered, "Yes—it was rotten luck. But I'm not beaten yet, Dad." Jeffreys senior clumped him on the back with sympathetic appreciation.

"Good enough, George. I shan't say any more, but you can guess that I'm glad to find you've something more in you than brains. I shan't forget."

That had meant a good deal to the persistent bike-hunter, and after the first shock had been met and endured he determined to get all the

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fun out of the summer vac. that could be compassed. In this he was entirely successful. When the Christmas term came round again he returned to Dipcote, cheerful as ever, determined as ever, sparing of words, philosophic and taciturn. When Swanston asked him if the programme was still on, he nodded grimly.

"Rather. Same as before."

"Don't overdo it, old man!" Swanston said earnestly. "No sense in crocking yourself."

"No fear. I didn't overwork before—just *worked* in the regular times, plus three-quarters of an hour a day before brekker. And I kept as fit as a fiddle. The scarlet was pure bad luck."

"I think your gov. should have given you the bike after that."

"No. A bargain's a bargain, and he's an awfully good sort. If I'd really *earned* them I'd have felt differently—I mean, if the marks had *been* there. I believe they *were*—in my mind. I believe I'd have done it. But as I can't know that for certain, I'd have felt a bit cheap accepting the bike on charity."

"Rum," was Swanston's comment. "I'd accept a bike (if I hadn't one) from the worst skunk on earth, stolen or not."

"No, you wouldn't," laughed George. "I know you better. Well, there's only another three months or less to go. Where's that Liddell and Scott?"

This final term was a trial, but it passed off well. Jeffreys, a soberer, more patient, slightly "older" Jeffreys, kept the course he had mapped out with extraordinary determination. The actual study was not much effort to him. Having plenty of brains and two terms' dogged industry behind him by way of training, he was in good trim for lessons. His fortnightly markings had shown him that for some time past. In Greek and Latin he was regularly over the 70 per cent. mark; in French and English he was above the 90. Even his weak subject—Maths—had doubled its value, and doggedness had done its work. His form-masters, who at first had suspected a flash in the pan, were now almost fulsome in their comments.

Manders went about in fear of losing the form "pot." Jeffreys did not worry about the pot at all; in fact, strictly speaking, he did not exactly "worry" about the bike. Enthusiasm was no less than at first, but it was quieter, less demonstrative than it had been six months ago. But he was determined to pull it off this time, unless Fate had another rod in pickle.

A MAN OF HIS WORD

The term passed without incident. Swanston noted with wonder that his friendly stimulants were hardly ever necessary. A fixed purpose and the habit of two terms were telling their own tale. Jeffreys now took to his tasks as a matter of course. When the exams came on he was not even excited. In his heart he was conscious of his powers. In all human probability he was safe for that 400, and a bit over ! In a week's time—though he never indulged in prophecy now—he saw himself seated in the saddle, as surely as he knew that the holidays were to begin on the 21st.

Greek, Latin, French, and Maths were over, and with all his papers he was more than satisfied. Comparing the answers, he knew that he must have totalled at least 85 per cent. or more, and only the English remained. When he read the English questions he could have laughed. At least 90 per cent. was an absolute certainty for him on that paper, and the bike was practically in his hand. With a serene heart he took up his pen and began to write. He finished a quarter of an hour before time was up, read his paper over and made a few corrections, and then fell into a day-dream. With pleasant and deserved self-gratulation he reviewed the results of a year's policy and its carrying-out. *He had shown he could do it*, and was on the eve of claiming the completion of the bargain. That bike had been well earned—twice over at least ; but now that it was done with, he did not regret that extra term. He had proved himself, and—and—the governor would be as pleased as Punch.

As in a dream his eyes wandered and fell upon the written sheets of the boy who was busy working next him. The word that caught his eye was "Redgauntlet." It was an essay in answer to the third question : "What is your favourite novel, and why ?" Jeffreys had written on *Ivanhoe*. He had also read *Redgauntlet* and been considerably bored by it. He wondered what on earth had made Somers—a most unlitrary youth—choose that work of Scott's. As a matter of fact, it had been the only novel Somers had read that year, and he thought he could write more about it than about anything else. Still in a half-dream, lulled by his labours and their satisfactory conclusion, Jeffreys let his gaze wander over a dozen lines. Then, recollecting himself, he awoke up with a jerk and averted his eyes. It was too late. The voice of the alert Mellish was heard.

"Jeffreys ! Bring me your papers !"

Without a word, George obeyed, and took them up to his desk.



WITHOUT A WORD, GEORGE OBEYED, AND TOOK THEM UP TO HIS DESK.

A MAN OF HIS WORD

"You know the rules, Jeffreys. Any boy who looks over another's paper in an exam loses all marks for his paper and must go before the Head."

"Yes, sir." (*Was that his own voice?*) "But I wasn't cribbing."

"I did not say that you were. In a case like this I have no option. I'm sorry, but you know the position. Anything you wish to say must be said to the Head. I saw you distinctly overlooking Somers's paper. You don't deny that?"

"No, sir. But——"

"Very well. I will see the Head after school."

Jeffreys returned to his desk in a condition that baffles description. The facts were naked—the rules well known. At Dipcote the tone was high—cribbing practically non-existent. But six years before it had been very different. Cribbing had been rife and discipline lax. A new head had succeeded the old man, who had retired after forty years' service. The new appointment had been marked by a month's inaction while the novice took stock. Then he took action. Six unhappy creatures—including a monitor—had been caught cribbing in an exam, and had been "sacked." The severity and suddenness made Dipcote gasp. Then had followed the new and inexorable rule: "*Any boy seen overlooking another's paper in any exam will ipso facto lose all marks for that paper, whether he is proved to have copied or not. He will also be reported to the Head. If he has copied and no extenuating circumstances present themselves, he is liable to be expelled.*" Drastic, in all conscience; and for a space the new Head was the most hated man in Dipcote. But he stuck to his guns, and no more "sackings" had proved necessary. Also, cribbing had disappeared. As a new generation arose, the Head's worth became more generally recognised, and he was now a popular figure. But he was like Jeffreys's father—a man of his word—and George felt in his bones that his English marks were lost for ever. But would he be sacked? Surely not——

"Of course not," said the Head, an hour later. "Your paper itself is so totally different from Somers's that there is no question of dishonesty. Your record is clean, and for the past three terms most excellent. I accept your word without any qualification. But you must lose your English marks. I am extremely sorry. But I am *determined* to uphold a Dipcote tradition of non-cribbing, and I must enforce the rule rigidly. Now you may go."

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George wandered out, stunned. Oddly, perhaps, he did not greatly blame the Head. He had a purpose, too—a man of iron will. Mellish, then? No—he was simply obeying a school rule. Himself? Of course, he had been an ass to allow his eyes to wander. But that had been unconscious—literally, he had been in a day-dream of ecstasy and had not realised—— An ass, perhaps, but it was tough. Suddenly he saw Mellish.

“I’m awfully sorry about this, Jeffreys, but I had no option.”

“No, sir,” said George apathetically, but without resentment. “I realise that.”

“Swanston has been talking to me on your behalf. He told me about the motor-bike. Now, the Head’s decision is irrevocable. But, if you like, I will correct your English paper and tell you what marks you would have got. It might stand you in good stead with your father. It might even mean the bike.”

“No chance, sir. Thank you all the same. I should like to know the marks, if you don’t mind correcting the paper, and I’ll tell my father if they do happen to top the 400. But—we had a bargain, and I expect he will keep to it.”

“Well, I hope he won’t,” said Mellish heartily. “For I am sure your act was sheer thoughtlessness, and you’ve been working well.”

The master was as good as his word, and gave George his English marks that night. They were 95. His other marks had been posted on the screen that afternoon. Their total was 323. So, if it had not been for a bit of bad luck his score would have been 418—success and a decent margin. Manders was placed top, with 412 to his credit.

George considered the problem. He had shown he was not a man to whine; more, he had *earned* those marks, though (alas!) he had not got them. Without much hope, he decided it was worth while letting his father know the facts. But there must be no *ad misericordiam* appeal. A man of spirit could not allow himself that, though the naked facts might permit a mere record. So by the last post he wrote a bald statement of the unhappy business. He ended thus:

So you see I actually earned the 400 and over, though they are not credited to me because I broke a school rule. I don’t mean to grouse about luck—I’ve never heard you do it—and I don’t want to say more. If you think this doesn’t fulfil the bargain, I shan’t growl. But I thought I might tell what happened.

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His father—good soul!—spent several shillings on a telegram, to put him out of his misery at the earliest moment. The pith of it was contained in this sentence :

Sorry, old man. Bargain still on. As soon as you show me 400 marks legally yours, the bike comes.

George got the wire in his study, read it in silence, and handed it to Swanston.

"The beast!" was Swanston's comment. George shook his head.

"No," he said. "My gov. is a darned good sort. But he never breaks his word."

Swanston looked unutterable things, but said no more.

The situation was beyond him—as indeed it was beyond George himself.

Next morning an outwardly calm George said good-bye to Mellish and his pals and started for home. The strokes of Fate apparently had left him still "Captain of his soul," for his features were unmoved. But when Swanston said tentatively, "Another knock next term?" he refused to commit himself. "I'll see," was all he said; and his chum, guessing at what he must be going through, forbore to press him. In a like situation Swanston felt that he would have run amok, but Jeffreys had grown a lot in the past year. So they said an unemotional "Cheerio," and went their respective ways.

Jeffreys's home was in Hertfordshire, and he had to go through London *en route*. He changed at Liverpool Street, and having an hour or more to wait for his connection, enjoyed an excellent lunch. This cheered him somewhat and helped him to face the imminent interview. Not that he felt resentment against his inexorable governor. He did not. Against Fate he could barely find thoughts sufficiently lurid, though he had shown no sign of the hidden fires to his pals. But the governor—queerly, a sense almost of pity took hold of Jeffreys as he sat in the train, covering the last few miles. The sportsman would be waiting for him in the familiar limousine—keen for the meeting and all it promised, yet sick at heart. They understood each other; both were sportsmen, both proud, with the right sort of pride. The governor must know what he was feeling after three failures—no! Two failures and one success—perhaps even one failure and two moral successes! Yet he would not be free to break his word. Poor

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old chap! He would be in torment. Jeffreys smiled grimly as he reviewed the situation—two decent chaps, fed to the teeth, and unable to find a solution till after the next exam. Oh, help! Could he face another term after all that had happened?

The train reached Boxmoor, and there was his father waiting on the platform. To the son's surprise the "old man" was positively beaming—not a sign of the "torment" that had seemed so certain. With a small internal grouch (What right had the gov. to look so cheery? It was hardly decent!) the outstretched hand was shaken, and the pair walked out of the station. On the road stood, not the familiar limousine, but a superlative little two-seater, shining with enamel and nickelling.

"Hallo! New car, pater? She looks a topper!"

"It's yours, George," came the astounding answer.

"What! But you said——"

"I promised you a bike when the marks were won. I can't break my word even for you, old boy. But after your noble effort I had to do something or burst—and neither of us had said anything about a car. The bike is still to be earned—the original offer stands—as I said in my wire!"

"You old fox!" said George, with a grin that split his countenance. "You old casuist! You old—sportsman! Jump in quick, and I'll drive you to Jericho or glory!"

"Carry on!" said Jeffreys *père*, as he obeyed. "I'll stand your first action for damages, provided I'm still alive!"





CAVE MEN

By Mark
Harborough

I

HOW long ago? Oh, many thousand years at least—before, indeed, there was a village or even a single house in our country! The few humans who existed lived in caves and trees, and very many of these perished by the cruel fangs of the wild beasts which then roamed the land. Nevertheless, let it be said, these prehistoric folk were scarcely less savage than the animals.

A great forest of oaks and ashes covered a certain hillside, at the foot of which a pleasant river had carved out for itself a channel in the sandstone valley. Here and there in the hill, above the winter floods, were caves inhabited by the wild, naked folk—poor shelters against the weather and the prowling, bloodthirsty denizens of the forest. Not always were the humans able to keep possession of these retreats, for it sometimes happened that a whole family would be destroyed in a single night by a sabre-toothed tiger or maybe a soft-footed bear.

At one of these lonely caves a tall, hairy, muscular man could be seen any evening about sundown blocking up the entrance with stout logs ere he ventured to sleep inside with his family. He knew only too well that to forget the precaution for one night would mean never to see the sun rise over the willows again; for had he not, with great courage and some cunning, turned out the rightful owner and killed

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its mate—to wit, a big, sabre-toothed tiger? Of the dwellers in the cave, the three eldest boys had a light down just appearing on their swarthy faces, and they carried themselves as those who were conscious of growing strength. One day, perhaps because of this, they were driven from the cave with blows, whilst the gleaming teeth and the flashing eyes of the man dared them ever to come back again. Not that this troubled them much, for were they not strong and brave enough to fend for themselves?

Fortunately it was the fine part of the year, and the sun shone for hours and hours on end, and the time of frosts was far away. Knowing that to sleep unprotected on the ground would be to fall an easy prey to the prowling beasts of the forest, they made themselves a secure resting-place high up in the branches of an oak, at a spot a good distance from the cave of their savage old father.

It was not many days before the elder brother—Larch he was called, because he was so tall and straight—said that an earth-dwelling would be more pleasant than the tree. The second brother—named Grasshopper, because he could leap over an upright man—assented; as did the third boy, who, when thinking, half closed his eyes—which gained for him the name of Sleepy-Eyes.

It was agreed, whilst they breakfasted on raw pig, that each brother should search separately for a cave, but that before sundown they should all come back to the oak to tell how they had got on.

The result of their searching was disappointing; no unoccupied cave was to be found. Larch, indeed, had weighed in his mind the killing of an old man whom he found living by himself in a small hole in the rocks, but the grey-beard had for his protection a couple of lean, tame wolves, which showed their teeth ominously as the boy came nearer.

Grasshopper had found a very large hollow tree, which would be comfortable for one, but not for three.

Sleepy-Eyes, passing along the river bank, although he had found no cave, had had the idea of making one, which he told his brothers all about. But they scoffed at the notion, and Larch said he should like to know where such a thing had ever been done before. Sleepy-Eyes looked discouraged for a moment, and then said he did not want always to live like an animal—although he admitted some beasts and some birds did build themselves places to live in.

Larch gave a grunt of derision, and, pointing to a magpie's nest

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high up in a fir tree, said a good wind would blow it down, but that a cave was safe and a place in which men might sleep.

Sleepy Eyes sighed as he thought over the truth of what was said, although he had not really meant to build anything like a bird's nest. He had in his mind's eye the work of the beavers down by the river—and he said so.

Grasshopper growled out that wood and mud would not be much of a defence against their enemies. So Sleepy-Eyes hinted at stone—stone put together on the ground like a mound, with a hole in the side.

His brothers laughed, Larch saying stones were not like twigs or leaves to stop together; and Grasshopper, picking up two stones, let them fall to show that they would not hold up in the air.

Sleepy-Eyes looked angry, and said he would see what he could do by himself. If creatures could build, so could he, and he challenged them to come down to the river at the end of seven days, and see what he had been able to do. Larch asked why he was going down to the river, and Sleepy-Eyes



PILED THEM ONE UPON ANOTHER IN A ROUGH CIRCLE.

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said it was because the banks were thick with stones, and he would want lots and lots.

Grasshopper said in that case he and Larch might as well wait about where they were and take things easy until the seven days were over. Whereupon Sleepy-Eyes hurried away towards the river. Not that he dared to begin his work that evening, but from the safety of some tall tree he could be thinking. It was fortunate that he had not been so foolish as to try to spend the night on the ground, for from the friendly shelter of a great tree he saw in the gloom the forms of wild beasts going to their drinking-place at the river.

When the sun had risen in all its splendour, he left his tree, moving along the river's bank away from the drinking-place until he came to a point where the ground was very stony. Having refreshed himself by sucking half a dozen wild ducks' eggs, he set to work piling the stones according to the great idea he had conceived. He chose out all the heavy flat stones—great lumps of sandstone—many of which he could scarcely lift, although he was very muscular, and piled them one upon another in a rough circle.

By nightfall the stones were near upon waist high, and he was well pleased with the progress he had made.

Regaling himself on liberal feeds of fish, the following day the wall rose by his exertions to the height of his chin. Looking at his handiwork, he chuckled, as he turned to go to his new tree, sure that he would be able to finish in far less time than seven days.

But alas for the inexperience of that far-off age! On the morrow he tried to build the stones for the roof by placing each course a little farther inwards than the last. No sooner, however, had he laboriously raised two or three projecting courses than down fell the stones, time after time. Indeed, at the end of his day's work he had practically made no progress at all.

The morning of the fourth day dawned, and Sleepy-Eyes, refreshed by sleep and fresh meat from a fox-kill, restarted to build with renewed keenness. Again he selected the broadest and flattest stones for the upper courses; but no, there seemed to be some evil spirit working against him, for every time the hope rose in his breast that he had at last overcome the difficulty, over toppled the stones again. It was not long before he came to the conclusion that he had hopelessly failed.

He realised that what was wanted was one large slab to cover from

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wall to wall, and so to span the space he could not master. No such stone, however, was available, and even had it been he could not, of course, have raised it, strong as he was. Leaving his work for a few minutes, he took a run in a direction where he hoped to find a crab-apple or other fruit-bearing tree at which to refresh himself. He had not gone far when he made a great discovery ; a slab of stone such as he wanted for his roof-covering was projecting out of a steep rock-face. He put his hands upon it, but it was rigid and unmovable. Frowning, he stared at the rock, lost in thought.

Suddenly it dawned upon him that half the work of cave-building was already done. This place should be the beginning of a new cave. He would abandon altogether the three days' work and start afresh.

Now the rock-face on the hill was as high as a half-grown oak, but the projecting stone was only the height of a man's head from the ground. Under it the rock receded back so as to form not a cave but a hollow. Sleepy-Eyes saw that if he piled stones under and up to the great stone, he could readily make a shelter not to be despised. Not only would the cover be rain-proof, but the walls would be strengthened by the natural rock-face at the back, and there would consequently be less building for him to do.

Setting to, he built with a will. By the end of his fourth day's work the wall was waist high, and at the end of the fifth day it was right up to the rock roof, with a nice little hole in the front for a doorway.

Sleepy-Eyes was so pleased with his handiwork that he decided to pass the night inside, having contrived, with great skill, to secure the opening with a log. It was well that he had taken this last precaution, for during the night he heard a tiger sniffing outside. Well, too, was it that the wall was thick, for the marauding beast raised itself against the stones to investigate the roof, trying to find a way in.

Sleepy-Eyes, lying very still at the back of the cave, turned over in his mind how he might get the tiger's skin the next time it came. The upshot of his cogitation was that by the evening of the sixth day he had set a trap at the entrance to the cave, whereby a jagged and heavy lump of rock, poised on the roof, would fall on the tiger should he put his head within the entrance. Brave as he was, Sleepy-Eyes did not take the risk of being inside the cave that night—he preferred an adjacent tree—for traps did not always act as might be expected of them.

However, everything worked this time according to anticipation.

The tiger came along at nightfall sniffing for human blood, and once more tried to get in. This time the door was open, and the creature foolishly poked in its head, only to let off the trap. Crash! Down came the great stone from above, breaking the tiger's back! The groans and growls soon ceased, and Sleepy-Eyes knew that he had got a skin for his bed. He dared not stir until daybreak, for there might be other animals about; but when the friendly sun arose above the river, he came down the tree like a monkey, and was not long in skinning his victim. The carcass he dragged from the neighbourhood of the cave, toppling it into a clump of bushes. Returning, he leapt on to the roof of his new abode, whereon he had left the skin, and sat down chuckling. Next he fingered the moist, limp skin, and finally drew it over his shoulders, letting the head rest on his own. He looked what he was, a wild child of the forest, not raised very far above the beasts.

Had he known that two pairs of bright eyes were watching him from the foliage at the top of the rock he might not have felt so satisfied. They were not friendly eyes, but rapacious, cruel ones, belonging to a man and a woman who were out to rob him of his new home.

The man had been prowling along the valley at daybreak and had seen with surprise Sleepy-Eyes skinning the tiger. But the new cave had made a greater impression upon his savage mind. It was a discovery—a wonder—for he knew that when he had come along a month before, such a place had not existed. He could not get near enough, without being seen, to look inside, but he saw Sleepy-Eyes crawl within, and did not doubt but that the place was just such a shelter as he and his wife wanted. Their old cave, miles away, had been ruined by the breaking out of a spring of water, and as yet they had found no suitable substitute.

The man decided to go and tell his wife, who was in a tree not far away, of his discovery. He had no doubt that the two of them could easily overpower this stalwart boy, although he would not like to attempt it alone. The boy was a tiger-killer, therefore he must be brave and strong and of some account in a fight.

II

LARCH and Grasshopper, during the seven days of waiting, had had an easy time, and besides feeding well, had enjoyed the sense of liberty now that they were free from the blows of their savage father. There-

fore they were quite willing to wait and see what Sleepy-Eyes could do with all his precious scheming—not that they believed it possible for him to make a cave, but there was no harm in his trying—and at any rate, he was working whilst they were lazing.

On the seventh day, going down to the river for fish for their breakfast, they noticed footprints in the mud. These could not have been their own, for some were small like a woman's and they were only recently made; indeed, the muddied water in the prints had not become quite clear again.

At the same time, not a quarter of a mile away, a flock of wild duck got up, and went off down the river at a great bustle. The intruders were evidently not far away yet.

Larch suggested that they should run and see who was about, for during the seven days they had seen no one, and they did not want strangers on their own particular hunting-ground. Grasshopper agreed, and they started off, taking all the cover they could. They need not have troubled, for the other two people were moving too fast to be caught. One mile, two miles, three miles—they could follow the track quite easily—and then Larch pulled his brother to his knees. One of the strangers had taken to a tree, while the other was not to be seen.

After waiting out of sight for half an hour, the brothers saw the man come back and speak eagerly to the woman, whereupon she joined him on the ground, each carrying a formidable-looking club.

Larch said he was sure something was going to happen, and they would follow up and see what it was.

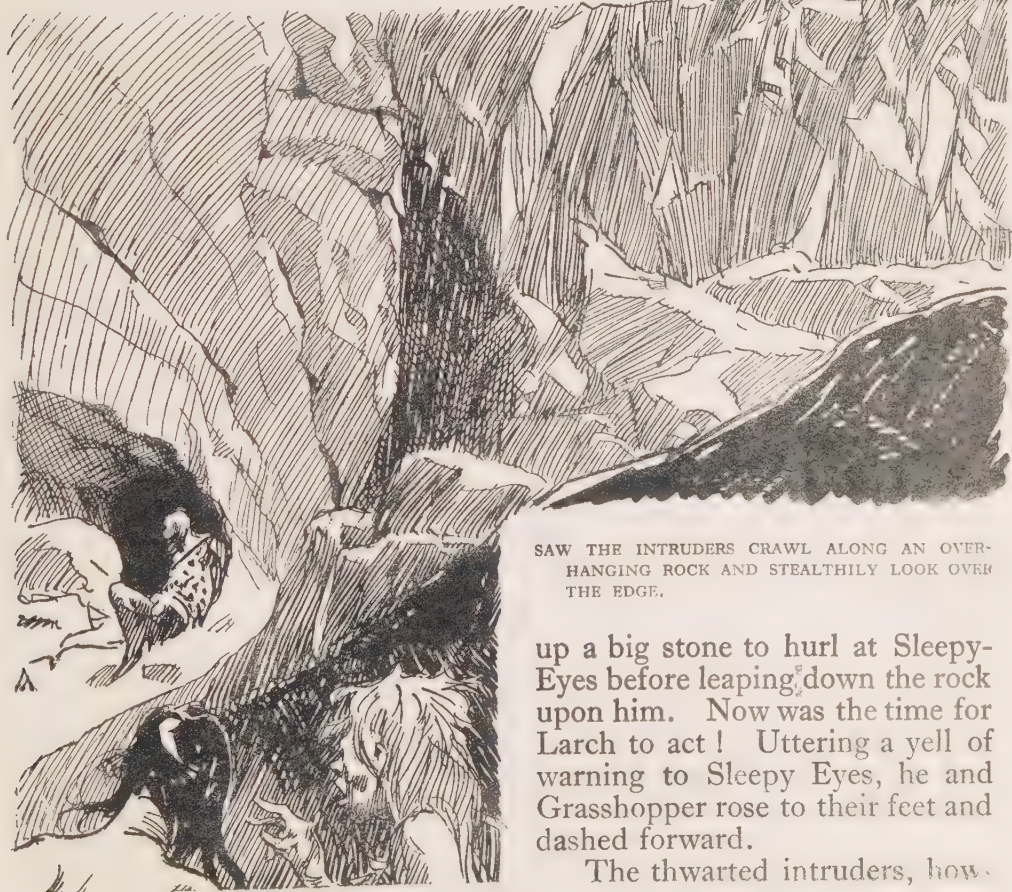
The man and the woman had not gone far before they left the river bank, and made their way up the higher and rocky ground where the forest started. They seemed to be pretty careful to take cover as they went, and it was evident they were much excited or perturbed about something. Larch and Grasshopper drew as near as they could without being seen, and at length saw the intruders crawl along an overhanging rock and stealthily look over the edge with bright, cruel eyes. What were they after?

They soon discovered what it was. Sleepy-Eyes had made or found a cave, and the pair were going to steal it from him—take his life, maybe. It was well they had come at this moment, for there contentedly sat their young brother, dressed in a tiger skin, unconscious of danger, an easy victim to the armed marauders above.

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The savages were evidently turning over in their minds the best way of attacking and overcoming the owner of the cave. Should they slip down the rock and fall upon him with their clubs? Should they throw their clubs at him?—they were deadly shots.

At length the man raised himself a little from the ground and took



SAW THE INTRUDERS CRAWL ALONG AN OVERHANGING ROCK AND STEALTHILY LOOK OVER THE EDGE.

up a big stone to hurl at Sleepy-Eyes before leaping down the rock upon him. Now was the time for Larch to act! Uttering a yell of warning to Sleepy Eyes, he and Grasshopper rose to their feet and dashed forward.

The thwarted intruders, how-

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ever, did not stop to fight—the combat would have been too unequal. They fled precipitately.

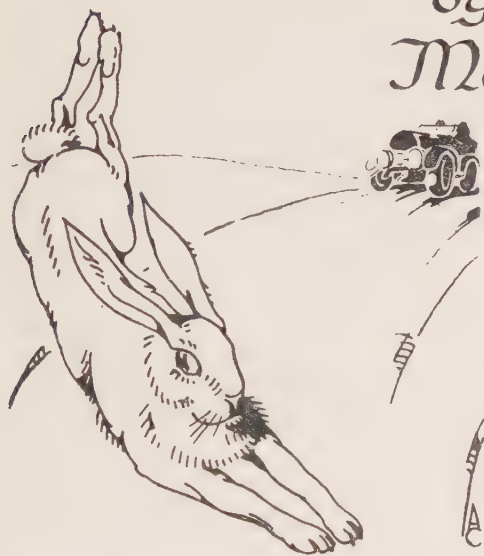
Sleepy-Eyes, greatly surprised at the commotion, nevertheless soon took in the situation, and gratefully thanked his brothers for the timely hand they had taken in the game. Then proudly he showed them the cave, and they were much surprised with the work, admitting he had accomplished what they had thought could not be done. At the same time they told him it was not much good being a good stone-piler if he did not keep a sharp look-out for enemies. It was no use making a shelter if he was to be killed before he could live in it—in fact, he ought to have been prepared for the would-be robbers.

Sleepy-Eyes did not know what answer to give, but perhaps the use of his brain had made him a little less of a fighting animal. At any rate he had builded better than he knew, for though his artificial cave was the first of its kind, it was not the last ; and, as time went on, its like was improved upon from century to century to such an extent that it became the custom for people to make what in later times were called houses.



The Days of the Hare

by
Marcus Woodward



PUSS, the hare, always seems a timid creature, as the only way she can escape her enemies is by running away. So we look upon her as meek-hearted. Yet she shows a fine spirit at times. And—who knows?—she may rejoice in the immense strength of her long hind legs, and in her speed, which defies the pursuit of her natural enemies. Her eyes are set on the sides of her head, and so wide apart that

she can look behind her as she runs. Her long ears—four to five inches long—can turn in any direction, forwards, outwards, or backwards, to catch the least hint of danger. She lives mainly in open country, and so is unlikely to be pounced upon unawares, in spite of her attachment to her chosen place of repose, her “form,” where she will sit so close as almost to allow herself to be trodden upon before leaping away. She will go off at full speed; turn at a tangent at full speed; and stop dead when in full career, to double back on her line. One may often gain an idea of a hare’s speed when motoring at night, for if one crosses the road as a car comes along, she will usually run a long way in the beam of the headlights, doubtless, as she runs, keeping her eyes on the car. The light seems to fascinate her; if it is switched off for a moment, she will disappear instantly in the hedgerow. I have timed the speed of hares when thus chased by a car at night, and have found that they can gallop at over thirty miles an hour.

There are many reasons why the hare lives on, and prospers, in our land when other stronger animals have lost the battle of life, and

THE DAYS OF THE HARE

passed off the stage for ever. Strength and ferocity may be the undoing of an animal: the hare points the moral that the meek shall inherit the earth. Perhaps luck plays a part in a wild animal's chances of life. The wolf and the boar passed over our stage six hundred years ago, whereas their one-time companion, the badger, oldest of our mammals, still holds his own, and we can see some of the reasons. Thus, it lives an underground life by day; can hibernate in winter; has a coat so coloured as to conceal it from view in its grey, rocky fastnesses, in twilight and moonlight; is very strong; inhabits strong fortresses; claims all its ancient rights of home and rights of way; is vigilant to discover danger, and powerful in defence. How different is the equipment of the timid hare!—a wanderer on the face of the earth, almost alone among our wild animals in having no place of refuge, no fort for a home. It is beset by bloodthirsty enemies—fox, stoat, and weasel—and its young are exposed to the peril of birds of prey. We may be inclined to pity the hare. Yet she might not thank us for our sympathy, and might tell us, if she could, how she glories in her free, roaming life of the fields and the hills.

Hares are wonderfully secretive, much more so than even country people suppose. They may prosper in a countryside, yet may rarely be seen in the high days of summer. In autumn and winter, eyes trained to see every sign of bird or beast may observe the hares dotted about the fields like so many molehills—yet may catch no glimpse of one the long summer through, till harvesting deprives them of the sanctuary of the corn. Driven out from one cornfield, the hares go to the next, and so pass from crop to crop, secret, invisible, until no corn is left for shelter, when they take to the cover of the rootfields. While they live much in the open, they appreciate a little cover, whether in corn, clover, roots, or woodlands. We have only to look at a hare to see how perfectly she is fitted for the life of the open plain—not only by her speed and backward-looking eyes, and the long hind legs, with the hairy, thickly brushed soles and long, sharp claws—but by the way the young are born in the open, complete in warm coats of fur, so unlike the blind, naked, helpless young of the rabbits, bred underground. At heart, hares are nocturnal animals, lying very low by day, so that even if a pack of beagles is out hare-hunting, a hare will still lie close in her form until the beagles encompass her on all sides. The evening is the time when she likes to leave her form, to feed and travel through the night.

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In one way it is lucky for the hare that the man who sees her will be likely to think of saddle of hare, jugged hare or hare soup, and other dishes fit for a lord ; because this means that he likes to see hares in prosperity. Again, it is lucky for the hare, as for the fox, that she shows good sport, for this also tends to preserve the race. The boar showed good sport in its day, and was prized when killed, for its flesh ; but was too dangerous a customer to be allowed to live on these accounts alone. The hare lives without doing much harm to man, beyond nibbling his corn and other crops, or dining off his garden carnations, wallflowers, or nasturtiums.

Supposed to be the most timid creature on earth, the hare is bold in defence of her young, and may even stand up to show fight to her deadly enemy, the stoat, if he threatens her young. She can swim a wide river if pressed by hounds. And in the courting season the Jack hares prove themselves very pranksome, quarrelsome animals. "As mad as a March hare" is no idle simile, for March turns the hares' heads in an astonishing way. One hare will then vigorously chase and attack another, charging with enough force to bowl the other head-over-heels, or leaping straight into the air, to come down with a slashing stroke of the powerful hind legs. A fight between two well-matched Jack hares is one of the most laughable sights in the animal world, as the two waltz round on their long hind legs, sparring and hissing. The Jacks hunt the Jills by the hour, running after them as they fly before, ringing round in circles, for miles. Probably they hunt by scent ; for you may see the hare in pursuit, when at fault, make a cast, as a dog would do, until he hits off the line.

In cunning, the hare matches the fox. Thus, when Puss is returning to her form in the early morning, she does not come straight home, like a swallow to her nest ; if her tracks were visible it would be seen that she makes a network pattern of her trail, crossing it to foil her own line, and making long leaps to baffle her pursuers. The form is usually fashioned in some little depression in a field, where the herbage is trodden down and shaped to fit the hare's body. Find the form, and if you have good eyes, you may find by the sign of her trail and by the bent grasses in the hedges where and how she passes in and out of the field. A friend of mine, a mighty hunter of hares, believes that they seldom use the same way in passing in and out of a field which they have made their home. The opening by which a hare passes through a hedge is called a meuse. You may find a meuse with

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the track leading outwards, and the grass at the sides bent accordingly. Then you may find another, where the track and the grasses show that it is the one used on the homeward journey. I think that my friend (Mr. Fred. M. Wood) was the first naturalist to suggest that this cunning trick is a habit.

He has told the story in a book he has written, *Round about the Sussex Downs*. And he also explains how Nature helps the hare, as well as her instinct for self-preservation, in that she leaves a strong scent on departing from her form, but a much fainter one on returning. He says that if a hare is seen to leave her form at dusk, and a spaniel is put on her scent, it will run the line fast. But if the spaniel is put on the scent at five o'clock of a summer morning, when the hare is coming home after her night's roaming, the dog will have trouble in picking up the line: he will have to "feather it out," whether there be dew or not. As a proof of the hares' quickness and activity, he tells of the way in which they sometimes leave their forms only to find themselves in the middle of a pack of beagles, when, by jumping over some and running round others, they often make good their escape. Once he saw a hare, having cleared the main pack, run sheer into a little hound, and knock it over, the hare turning a complete somersault. Probably she was looking behind her at the time.

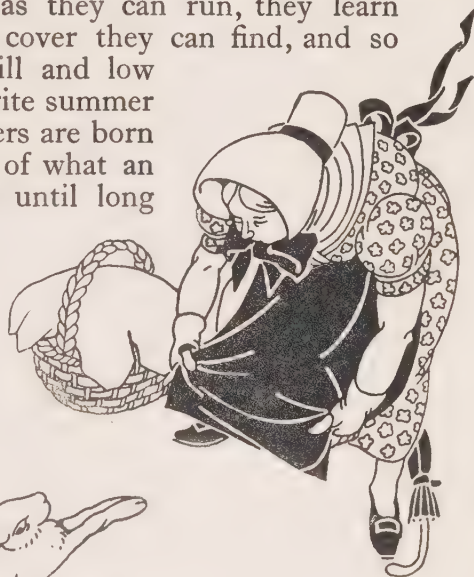
The blind rush of the hunted hare is illustrated by a curious story told in an old book, *Annals of Sporting*. An old country dame was walking down a lane when a hare, hard pressed by hounds, drove straight towards her at top speed. With much presence of mind, she stooped, and held out her apron, the hare running straight on, and being gathered up by the old lady—thus to be saved from the hounds, but whether from her stew-pot the historian does not relate. A Master of Harriers tells a similar story: having lost his hare, he inquired of another old dame, met on the road, if Puss had passed her way. "No," she said, truthfully enough, and went on, carrying off the hare, which she had caught in the voluminous folds of her umbrella.

The earliest young hares of February and March are bred to face more perils than those born later in the year, having harder weather to endure, and no sanctuary in rising corn, so that they are a likely prey to every marauder. The fox dines well on tender young hares in early spring; and a deadly enemy is the crow. It is not for worms only that he stalks over the fallows in the days of young hares and March violets, and though the leverets are well camouflaged by their

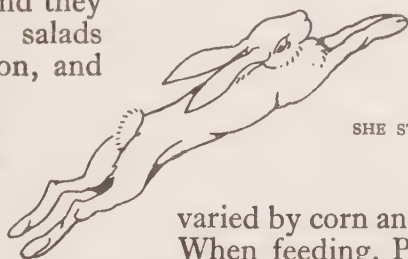
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coats, which perfectly match the ground, he finds them all out. The doe quickly moves her young if she scents danger, as when disturbed by a farm-worker, or in early spring by a man looking for plovers' eggs. She then carries her young in her mouth, one by one, from the separate forms where they lie, to other places of refuge.

Probably there will be two or three young ones in a litter, and the doe may have three or four litters. The new-born leverets are the prettiest little animals imaginable, and are often found with white stars on their foreheads. As soon as they can run, they learn how to take advantage of any little cover they can find, and so hide from hawks, as they lie very still and low through daylight hours. Their favourite summer home is the cornfields. Many late litters are born in the corn, and can have no notion of what an exposed life in open country means until long after harvest. The corn is a perfect sanctuary, or nearly so, though it may possibly also shelter the fox and the badger; and we may suppose that the summer days pass lightly and happily for young hares. By night they may move out to feed on young crops in fields of swedes, turnips, or clover, and they are fond of such salads as lettuce, dandelion, and parsley. Grass and sow-thistles and all sorts of herbs make up their main diet,



SHE STOOPED, AND HELD OUT HER APRON;



varied by corn and turnips and the like. When feeding, Puss likes to sit erect, with ears pricked; squatting, with ears set back, if alarmed. On making up her mind to race away, she starts by a leap of five or six yards. Watch her running: she goes at a gallop, never trotting, the long hind legs swinging forward as one. The pace she enjoys is an easy, loping sort of canter.



WHEN FEEDING, PUSS LIKES TO SIT ERECT,
WITH EARS PRICKED.

To the hares bred in the corn there comes a day of woe, perhaps a July day when winter oats are cut. Old hares may slip away in quiet intervals of harvesting, but the young ones may linger on until the last strip falls. It must be like the end of the world to them when the forest of corn is laid low. It is when hares are bewildered and in a stupid state through the sudden loss of cover that a new peril arises in the form of the hare-poacher. What with coursers, hunters, shooting-men, and poachers and gipsies, hares have many enemies besides furred and feathered ones. After harvest they begin to use gateways freely when travelling at night about enclosed country, and the poacher nets them easily at the gates, or takes them in snares, as his dog drives them in from the fields. And the gipsy's lurcher picks them up without trouble as they wander about like lost sheep.



One day I saw a clever bit of hare-poaching. I saw an old man crossing a plough-field with a lurching gait, and in a strangely purposeless fashion—it was as if he had lost his way home from a tavern, being fuddled by ale. He was as brown and dirty as the soil. His progress, though uneven, was steady, and suddenly as he went along his right hand shot to the ground and picked up a hare—a hare that must have known of his approach from the moment he left the road, but thought perhaps there could be no harm in such a clod-hopper. No doubt the old rascal had marked the hare from far off as he came along the

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road. If you know the trick, it is quite possible to walk up to a crouching hare, and grab her unawares. That hare died as, without losing a stride or quickening one, the old man pushed it into his pocket ; and only a person watching very closely would have understood the craft and guile of his clever poaching.

Through the autumn the hares lie out among roots, in stubble or on long grass, and they lie marvellously close to the ground. They must be very hardy, thus to brave all sorts of weathers. After harvest some hares go into woods, choosing those with plenty of daylight. When, in November, the leaves fall, they emerge in the open. Hard wintry weather drives them in again to the short-cut parts of woods, or to big old double hedgerows, where they lie by day on the leeseide.

With February the mating season sets in, and it is then that hares give hounds the finest runs of the year. Jacks, seeking out does, become great travellers, and grow lean and hard. Jacks are found far from their homes, as is shown by the way they will run four or five miles on a straight course if hunted, as they head for home.

We have in this country two kinds of hares : the brown, and the mountain hare which haunts Scottish highlands. This is really an Arctic animal, and in autumn it sheds its greyish coat to put on one of purest white, except for the black-tipped ears. It has more enemies to face than our familiar brown hare : golden eagle, peregrine falcon, raven, crow, and fox. Smaller than the brown hare, it is an easy prey to the golden eagle, who will lift it high into the air with no effort.

The hare has not achieved the same honours as the fox in the fables and literature of our country, though in negro folklore it has a high place, and in America—where they speak of hares as rabbits—it may have been a hare which suggested the adventures of “ Brer Rabbit.” In our literature the poet Cowper sang about the hare, for it was his delight to keep tame hares in his house—a Turkey carpet for their lawn. A little leveret may soon be tamed, and will learn to take milk and water from a spoon, and to follow her friends about house and garden, giving endless amusement by her capers and gambols, and learning to answer to her name. Of one of his pet hares the poet sang :

“ I kept him for his humour’s sake,
For he would oft beguile
My heart of thoughts that made it ache,
And force me to a smile.”

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There is one curious old superstition about the hare which dies hard : the idea that if a hare crosses a man's path as he sets out on a journey it is an omen of ill-fortune. The idea is thus explained by an old writer, Sir Thomas Browne : " That a fearful animal passing by us portends unto us something to be feared." So the meeting of a fox was supposed of old to be a warning of a coming imposture : the fox being so full of artful dodges. An old play has these neat lines about *lepus* (the hare), indicating the thankfulness of a traveller who escaped the omen :

" Nor did we meet, with nimble feet,
One little fearful *lepus*,
That certain sign, as some divine,
Of fortune bad to keep us."

It would be amusing to know what omen the hares draw when a man crosses *their* paths : not a complimentary one, it is to be feared, to man.





The MAJOR'S • PRIZE • FOWLS

By

Captain • Oswald • Dallas

MAJOR WILBRAHAM TOLLEMACHE, late of the Indian Army, had the reputation of being eccentric. He was a stout, bluff man with a red face, fierce-looking eyes under heavy grey brows, bristly moustache, and a manner calculated to inspire fear in those who did not know him. Those who were better acquainted with him knew that under the crust of his rough exterior he carried a kindly heart. He was a bachelor, fairly well off, and owned a good-sized house standing back by itself on the road leading from Groomborough to Crowbridge, with a paddock in front, a garden on either side, and a piece of waste land behind, for which hitherto he had not been able to find a use.

It was characteristic of the major that he was always discovering some fresh means of occupying his time. He would take up something, pursue it with tremendous energy for a week or two, and then tire of it and take up something else.

His latest idea was to keep fowls. They were not to be common, ordinary fowls, but Andalusians of the purest strain. He bought six to start with, which he was led to understand had pedigrees almost as long as his own, and *his* progenitors had come over with the Normans. For each of **them** he paid five guineas. He may have been cheated, but if so, it has nothing to do with this story. What he was going to do with them it would be difficult to say, for they were much too valuable for the table, and all the eggs he needed he could have purchased from the surrounding farms.

THE MAJOR'S PRIZE FOWLS

A man had come from Crowbridge, accompanied by a youth with goggle eyes and a singular lack of intelligence, and, under instructions from the major, a house and run was erected on the waste ground. He was extremely hard to satisfy, and all the time that they were at work he kept talking of the great value of the fowls.

"Five guineas each I gave for them," he kept on saying. "Five guineas. No finer birds in England," while the goggle-eyed youth listened to him in open-mouthed wonder.

The precious fowls had been installed in their new environment when the Groomborough troop of Boy Scouts began arranging for their usual camp, and Mr. Farquhar, the Scoutmaster, in ignorance of the major's new hobby, approached him for permission to establish their camp on his waste ground.

The major was in what he called his study, though it was mostly given up to guns and fishing-tackle, when Mr. Farquhar was shown in.

"Well, Farquhar," he asked in his brusque manner, "what do you want?"

"We are making preparations for my troop to go into camp," returned Mr. Farquhar, smiling, "and I came to ask if you would allow us the use of your ground, as you have been so good as to do before."

"No, I won't," said Major Tollemache uncompromisingly.

"I am sorry, sir," returned the Scoutmaster. "We have been rather building on getting your permission."

"You shouldn't take things for granted," growled the major.

"I hope that you had no fault to find with us the last time we were here," said Mr. Farquhar.

"That has nothing to do with the question. You can't have the ground this time."

The Scoutmaster was turning away disappointed, and had reached the door, when the major called him back. He hoped that the gruff old soldier had changed his mind, but in that, as it appeared, he deceived himself.

"See here," said the major, "do you know anything about fowls?"

"Fowls, sir?"

"Fowls—fowls, that is what I said. Are you any judge?"

"Well, I don't know about being much of a judge. I keep a few."

The major sprang from his chair. "Come and see mine," he said.

The two went out to the patch of spare ground where the fowls were pecking up and down.

THE MAJOR'S PRIZE FOWLS

"What d'you think of these, eh—what d'you think of these?"

"They appear to me to be very fine birds," replied Mr. Farquhar. "Pure bred, I should imagine."

"Pure bred!" grunted Major Tollemache. "I should say they were pure bred. The finest strain in England, sir. The finest strain in England."

The Scoutmaster honestly admired the birds and expressed his admiration, at which the major was greatly pleased.

"I see you are a judge, Farquhar," he said, rubbing his hands; "I see you are a judge. Now, about these Boy Scouts of yours. I can't give you this ground. You can see that for yourself."

"I see, sir," replied the Scoutmaster. "Of course, I didn't know."

"Of course you didn't. Now if I give you permission to pitch your camp on the paddock, you will see that the boys don't interfere with my fowls, eh?"

"They won't do that," answered the Scoutmaster. "They wouldn't think of such a thing, I'm sure."

"Humph! Boys are boys. They are always up to some mischief. They wouldn't be boys else."

"I shall put them on their honour," returned Mr. Farquhar, smiling, "though I assure you it is quite unnecessary."

"All right—all right! You can have the paddock; but mind this, if my fowls are interfered with, it will be the last time."

Three days later the Groomborough Troop, numbering twenty-five lads, pitched their tents on Major Tollemache's paddock. The major was there to welcome them as they marched in, and made them a rousing speech on the glories of the Empire, and their duties as citizens destined to carry on that great heritage, winding up with a lecture on the sanctity of private property. He made no particular reference to fowls, but Mr. Farquhar smiled inwardly as he listened.

When he had finished, Patrol-Leader Walter Jennings, a bright-faced lad whose arm was covered with badges, took off his hat and waved it above his head.

"Three cheers for Major Tollemache!" he called out, and three ringing cheers rent the air.

A deeper flush came to the red face of the major. He stood erect as if on parade until the sound had died away. Then he raised his hat straight from his head.

"Thank you, my lads," he said in a hoarse voice, and turning,

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marched hastily back to the house. "Fine boys! Splendid boys!" he muttered to himself as he went. "Old England all right while we have youngsters like that. Make grand soldiers—make grand soldiers."

The next morning turned out glorious. There had been some



rain a day or two before, but the grass was now fairly dry. At seven o'clock Tattie Smith, bugler, thirteen years old, had made a valiant attempt to sound *réveillé*; he broke down twice, but refusing to be defeated, pursued it to the bitter end. Anyway, all knew what he meant, and sprang from their blankets. Tent flies were rolled up, bedding was put out in the sun, ablutions were performed amidst much laughter and sky-larking, and presently all settled to breakfast as a preparation for a hard day.

They were in the middle of it when Major Tollemache came striding across the paddock, his Indian servant, in a long white garment and turban, a couple of yards behind him. The major was waving a stick in the

"MY FOWLS!" HE BELLOWED. "MY BEAUTIFUL FOWLS!"

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air, his face was purple, and every hair of his moustache seemed to be bristling. Marching up to where Mr. Farquhar was seated, he seized him by the shoulder.

"My fowls!" he bellowed. "My beautiful fowls! Where are they?"

"Your fowls, Major?" returned the Scoutmaster in amazement. "I don't know what you mean. I don't know anything about them."

The major glared at him. For a time he struggled to speak, but his wrath choked him.

"Have you lost your fowls?" asked Mr. Farquhar.

"Lost 'em, sir! Lost 'em!" gurgled the major. "They have been stolen! My beautiful prize birds have been stolen!"

"I am sorry to hear that——"

"Sorry, sir! Don't tell me that you are sorry. I knew what would happen when I let your confounded lads into my paddock. I had a premonition. . . . I dare say you think it is dashed clever . . . living on the country and all that. Have you killed them all? Hang it, have you killed them all?"

"If you are under the impression that we have taken your birds, Major Tollemache, let me assure you that you are mistaken," said the Scoutmaster. "We would gladly protect your property; we should certainly not interfere with it."

"Then where are the birds? That's what I ask you—where are they? Every one is gone. But I'll find out who the culprits are, and when I do, I'll prosecute them with the utmost rigour of the law. I'll offer a reward of twenty pounds for the discovery of the miscreants."

With that he turned and marched back to the house, followed by his Indian servant, who was suffering under the lash of his temper.

"Silly old fool to think that we would take his fowls," said Tommy Mersden, a youth of fourteen.

"Shows that he doesn't know much about Scouts," remarked Peter Gray.

"That is not quite the way to look at it, boys," put in Mr. Farquhar. "To suppose that we would take his birds only proves that he doesn't quite understand us, but we must remember that he has been very good to allow us the use of his paddock. He is very much upset, for I know that the fowls are very valuable, so we must look over what he said."

"Of course we'll look over it, sir," said Patrol-Leader Jennings, "but don't you think it is up to us to try to find out who took them?"

THE MAJOR'S PRIZE FOWLS

"If we found out we could claim the reward," suggested George Blain, a youngster who had just joined the troop.

Jennings regarded him scathingly.

"Blain," he said, "you have a lot to learn yet. Scouts don't do that sort of thing for reward. They do it because it is the right thing to do. May we try to investigate, sir?" he asked the Scoutmaster.

"Well," replied Mr. Farquhar, "it is not quite what I had planned out for the day's work, but I think we owe it to Major Tollemache to find out who has stolen his fowls if we can. Besides which, it will be practice for you in using your brains and eyes. But it is no use for you all to go. Three of you will be enough. You can take Mersden, Jennings, and—let me see——"

"Please, let me go, sir," said Blain eagerly.

"Very well," answered the Scoutmaster; "but remember there is no idea of reward."

Tommy Mersden was jubilant.

"This is top-hole!" he exclaimed. "I have always wanted to be a detective. I'm jolly sure I should make a good one."

"The first thing to be done is to examine the ground where the fowls were kept," said Patrol-Leader Jennings, "and see if there are any footmarks or anything of that sort. Come on, you chaps!"

When they reached the piece of waste ground the major was there, standing with folded arms, regarding the place sadly where the fowls had been.

"What d'you want here?" he demanded, frowning at the lads.

"We are going to try to find out what has become of your birds, sir," Jennings replied.

"How the dickens can you find out?" asked the major.

"We can try anyway, sir. Whoever took them would leave some trace, and we could follow the spoor."

"Eh? Eh? What's that? What do you know about following spoors?"

"We are taught that in the Scouts, sir," answered Jennings, glancing at his sleeve.

"Tommyrot!" grunted the major, but he raised no objection.

The three lads searched about with their eyes on the ground. Footmarks there were in plenty, but they all seemed to lead to the house. Just outside the fowl-house were a number of feathers.

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"That was caused by the birds struggling when they were taking them away," remarked Jennings.

"There must have been more people than one," said Mersden. "One person couldn't take away six birds."

Jennings made no reply. He bent down and picked something from the ground. It was a piece of rough sacking.

"Have you been using a sack, sir?" he asked the major.

"Sack? No; what would I want with a sack? The fowls came in a case."

"Good!" said Jennings. "That's the first clue."

He put the shred of sacking in his pocket.

The ground was enclosed by a hedge, beyond which were open fields. Dividing the hedge from the fields was a stream about four feet in width.

"They wouldn't be likely to go that way," observed Tommy Mersden.

On the left side of the ground was another field on the nearer side of the stream; by crossing it one came to the road, which was little more than a country lane. Here Jennings looked over the hedge, his brow corrugated in deep thought.

"The thieves are not likely to have crossed the stream, as you say, Mersden," he remarked; "and they wouldn't come by way of the paddock. Therefore they must have gone over this field and on to the road. That's the way for us to take. And, by Cripps!—here is where they passed through the hedge."

He pointed excitedly to the hedge, which showed signs of someone having forced his way through it. Here also were foot-marks, unusually large, flat, and without nails. He ran back to where Major Tollemache was still standing, contemplating his raided fowl-run.

"Does anybody about your place wear gum-boots, sir?" he asked.

"Gum-boots—gum-boots? I wear them myself sometimes," answered the major testily.

"Have you been climbing that hedge with them on lately?"

"Climbing the hedge?" growled the major. "What the dickens would I want to climb the hedge for? Do you take me for a confounded fool?"

"No, sir; no, sir," returned Jennings, his eyes sparkling. "Oh,

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clever," he said to himself. "The thief has worn gum-boots so that his footprints couldn't be recognised. This way, you chaps."

They pushed through the hedge and crossed the field of rough grass. Here and there Jennings thought he descried signs of the flat footmarks, but he couldn't be quite sure. Where the field skirted the road there was a spot in the hedge where a man might have forced his way through, and on the other side were the footmarks. Close to the hedge they were clear, but the road was a good deal cut up with the tracks of vehicles, and there they were lost.

Tommy Mersden's detective instincts were on fire. He was nosing about like a ferret.

"Whoever stole the birds has got into a cart here," he said triumphantly. "It was a light cart, too. You can see that by the narrow tyre-marks, and they are quite fresh. That cart passed here during the night, and it was going towards Groomborough."

"How can you tell that?" asked Blain sceptically.

"That's what you learn from being a Scout, my son," returned Mersden, a trifle pompously. "You can see the marks of the horse's hoofs turned that way. A little horse it was—a pony, quite likely."

"With a blind eye and lame in the hind foot," said Blain derisively.

"Whether it was blind or not doesn't matter to us," replied Mersden. "We know what we have got to look for."

"Mersden is right," observed Jennings. "Let us follow the track."

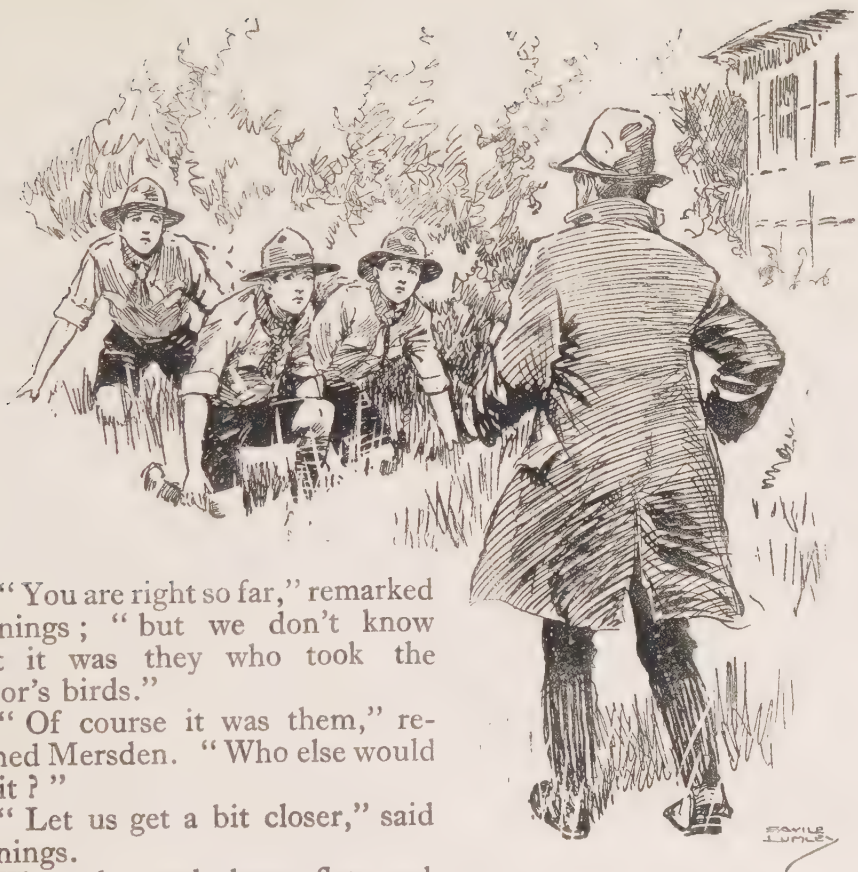
They hastened along the road for about a couple of miles. The narrow wheel-marks were quite clear, showing that they had passed over the ground recently. Then they turned into a lane shaded by trees. The lads followed this lane for about a hundred yards. Then the patrol-leader suddenly stopped.

"Look!" he exclaimed. "By Cripps, we are right!"

The lane ended in a little hollow, and there, snugly encamped, was a party of gipsies. At the door of a little brown tent a man lay at full length on his back, smoking. A younger man was attending to a pony, and some dirty-looking children were playing about. A fire of wood was burning brightly, and seated on the steps of a light, yellow-painted van was an elderly woman.

She was plucking a fowl!

"What did I tell you?" said Mersden. "Wasn't I right? You have only got to use your eyes. Gipsies! I could almost have sworn it. Everybody knows that gipsies steal fowls."



"You are right so far," remarked Jennings; "but we don't know that it was they who took the major's birds."

"Of course it was them," returned Mersden. "Who else would do it?"

"Let us get a bit closer," said Jennings.

They dropped down flat, and under cover of some bushes crawled nearer to where the old woman was plucking the fowl, the feathers all about her.

"Wash-out!" said Jennings disgustedly, in a whisper.

"What d'you mean?" asked Mersden, who was very pleased with himself.

"We're on the wrong scent, that's all, fathead. The major's birds are Andalusians."

"Well?"

"Shows you don't know anything about fowls. These feathers are white. Andalusians are dark grey, almost blue."

The lads must have spoken louder than they knew, or the ears of the man who lay smoking must have been very acute. He

"'ULLO!" HE SAID GRUFFLY; "WOT
MAY YOU BOYS WANT 'ERE?"

THE MAJOR'S PRIZE FOWLS

jumped to his feet and ran to where they were crouching behind the bushes.

"'Ullo!" he said gruffly; "wot may you boys want 'ere? A-spyin' into wot don't concern yer."

It could not be denied. They had been spying, though it had been in a good cause. The lads rose to their feet, looking a little shamefaced.

The younger man who had been attending to the pony now rushed forward, a long whip in his hand, his manner decidedly menacing.

"Wot's all this 'ere?" he demanded.

"Some valuable fowls have been lost——" Jennings was commencing, when the young man caught hold of his arm and raised his whip, but the other pushed him aside with a loud laugh.

"Mother," he called out to the old woman, "have you been a-priggin' of anybody's fowls?"

"I take anybody's fowls!" cried the old lady indignantly; "I'd like to see the person as 'ud say as 'ow I took their fowls. Just 'cause we lives on the road we are taken for thieves. But I can tell 'e that we are honest folks that buys wot we want though times is cruel 'ard. This 'ere bird cost me three shillin's at Crowbridge, and a tough old thing it is."

"Let me give 'em a lickin'," put in the young man. "A-takin' away of pore folks' characters."

"No, no, Jem," replied the other man, laughing. "They don't know no better. You come and 'ave a look round," he said to the lads. "If you find any other fowls besides the one as Mother is a-pluckin' of there, you can go to the p'lice and tell 'em as 'ow we stole 'em."

He forced them to accompany him, but not another fowl was visible in the van or out of it.

"I 'opes as 'ow you are satisfied," said the man then. "And let me tell you as it ain't always safe to jump at things. You better trot off now, or Jem'll be wantin' to try that 'ere whip on yer."

As they took their way back to the camp, Blain was very sarcastic.

"A light cart with a pony," he jeered. "Clever, oh, very clever! You always wanted to be a detective, didn't you, Mersden? You were jolly sure you would make a good one. Oh yes. A regular Sherlock Holmes!"

"Shut up, Blain," said Mersden, "or I'll punch your head. If you weren't such a fathead you would know that the best detectives often begin with a false clue. But they don't give up for all that."

THE MAJOR'S PRIZE FOWLS

"Quite right," agreed Jennings. "We'll go back and start again."

They went back to the spot where it was evident that someone had broken through the hedge. There they examined the ground very carefully, but for a time nothing rewarded their efforts.

"Look here, Jennings!" Mersden suddenly called out.

The Patrol-Leader went to where his chum was standing with his eyes glued to the ground.

"A bicycle?" he said.

"You can see here in the ditch where it was laid against the hedge," returned Mersden eagerly. "And look here, and here. It came as far as this and then went back."

"Ridden by a man with a red head," grinned Blain.

The two others treated his remark with disdain. They were examining the marks made by the tyres, which were somewhat peculiar, a star alternating with two strokes. The trail started about a dozen yards in the opposite direction to that in which they had previously gone.

"To Crowbridge," said Mersden; "let us get on."

"Why, Crowbridge is seven miles," grumbled Blain.

"What if it is?" returned Jennings. "We have undertaken to try to find out what has become of the fowls, and we've got to do it."

They had no great difficulty in following the spoor, and in about two hours' time they entered the little town of Crowbridge. There it was not easy, as the traffic had obliterated the marks of the tyres, but passing through the main street they managed to pick up the trail again where the bicycle had turned into a lane.

"You chaps stay here," said Jennings then. "I am going to have a look round on my own."

"You may find some more gipsies," observed Blain, with a grin.

Jennings went down the lane, presently coming to a yard with a wide gate. Over the gate was painted the legend:

J. GREEN,
JOBGING BUILDER.

The pulses of Patrol-Leader Jennings beat rapidly, for here the marks of the bicycle tyres were clearly visible. The bicycle had passed through the gate!

THE MAJOR'S PRIZE FOWLS

He entered the yard cautiously and looked round him. There was no one visible. At one side of the yard, which was littered with old bricks and drain pipes, was a wooden shed against which lay some planks of wood, and on the other side a smaller wooden building, with a window, about eighteen inches square and about six feet from the ground.

Leaning against this building was a bicycle. Jennings walked up to it and glanced at the tyres. He was right so far. The marks were those which he had traced along the road.

Was the owner of the yard the man who had stolen the fowls?

Jennings looked round him. There was no sign of the birds. It looked as if his clue were going to fizzle out here, when suddenly his eyes lit on an old sack that had been thrown down on a heap of lime. As he looked at it he drew in his breath.

He ran towards it and examined it carefully, taking from his pocket the piece that he had picked up. It corresponded exactly with where the sack was torn at the mouth. And if stronger evidence had been wanted that this sack had been used for the removal of the fowls, it was here. Adhering to the inside were a few small feathers of a bluish-grey colour.

Jennings went back to where his two chums were waiting for him at the corner of the lane.

"Any luck?" asked Mersden.

"We are on the right track," answered Jennings. Then he bent forward and whispered in Mersden's ear.

"By Cripps, you don't say so!" exclaimed that young gentleman.

"What are you two whispering about?" asked Blain sulkily.

"Not much," answered Jennings, "only we've found where the birds were taken."

"Have you seen them?" asked Blain, in a tone which expressed doubt.

"No, but we've got to find them. You come with me."

The three went to the builder's yard. At the gate Jennings stopped.

"You know what Andalusian fowls are like, I suppose?" he said to Blain.

"Of course I do. They haven't got white feathers."

"You stroll round quietly and see if you can see any."

Blain went off, grumbling. The lane continued for some distance,

THE MAJOR'S PRIZE FOWLS

and then turned to the left, where it led back to the main street. Here there were a few scattered houses. At the backs of several of the houses he saw fowls, but none of them were Andalusians.

"What an ass Jennings is!" he said to himself. "As if anybody who had stolen fowls would be likely to have them about their place!" Jennings and Mersden entered the yard.

"I wanted to get him out of the way," said the former. "He would be pretty sure to mess things up. There is the bicycle and here is the bag. You can see some of the feathers in it."

Mersden regarded the sack and the bicycle thoughtfully.

"Unless he has disposed of the birds already—and he hasn't had much time—they ought to be about here somewhere."

"Why do you think that?"

"Because the bag is here," answered Mersden, "and he wouldn't take them out before he got to the place where he was going to put them."

"By George, you are right, Tommy!" Jennings exclaimed. "I wonder where he could conceal them."

"What about this building?" asked Mersden, indicating that against which the bicycle lay.

They tried the door, but it was locked.

"Give me a back and I'll look into the window," said Jennings.

Mersden bent, and the Patrol-Leader climbed on his shoulders.

"It's a sort of office," he said then. "I can see a packing-case in one corner."

"You bet the fowls are in that case," returned Mersden. "Do you think you could get in?"

"I'm going to try."

The window was fastened with a catch, but Jennings opened this easily with his knife. He got the upper part of his body through—and there he stuck.

While he was struggling, a cart entered the yard, and with it two men. One was a youth of about nineteen with goggle eyes, and the other an elderly man whose clothes were covered with lime and dust.

The latter ran forward, seized Mersden, and threw him on the ground.

"'Ere, catch 'old of this 'un, Billy," he shouted to the goggle-eyed youth; but that individual stood staring, with his mouth open. Leaving Mersden, the man caught hold of Jennings's legs and pulled him down

THE MAJOR'S PRIZE FOWLS

"What are you doin' of 'ere a-breakin' into my office?" he demanded throatily. "What's your little game?"

For the moment Jennings was too dazed to reply.

"Committin' of a burglary, that's what it is," said the man. "You scoot off, Billy, and fetch a policeman."

The youth with the goggle eyes took no notice of the order, but continued to stare with his mouth open.

Jennings had recovered his wits.

"We should like the police to be sent for," he said. "We shall have something to tell them when they come."

The man stared at him.

"And what may you mean by that?" he demanded roughly. "I'm an honest tradesman, I am, and I ain't done anything to make me afear'd of the police."

"What about the fowls that were stolen from Major Tollemache?"

"Fowls? Stolen from Major . . . I don't know what you're talkin' about."

The youth with the goggle eyes here let out a howl, and turning, ran from the yard.

"After him, Mersden!" shouted Jennings. "That's the thief!"

It looked as if he would escape, but at that moment Blain appeared at the gate of the yard, disgust on his face.

"Catch him, Blain!" cried Mersden.

Blain seized the flying youth, and was able to hold him until Mersden came up. They dragged him back to where the other man still held Jennings.

"I didn't mean no 'arm," he wailed. "Please don't 'and me over to the p'lice."

"Did you take them 'ere fowls, Billy?" demanded the man sternly.

The youth made no reply, but blubbered like a baby.

"Where are they?" asked the man. "What 'ave you done with 'em?"

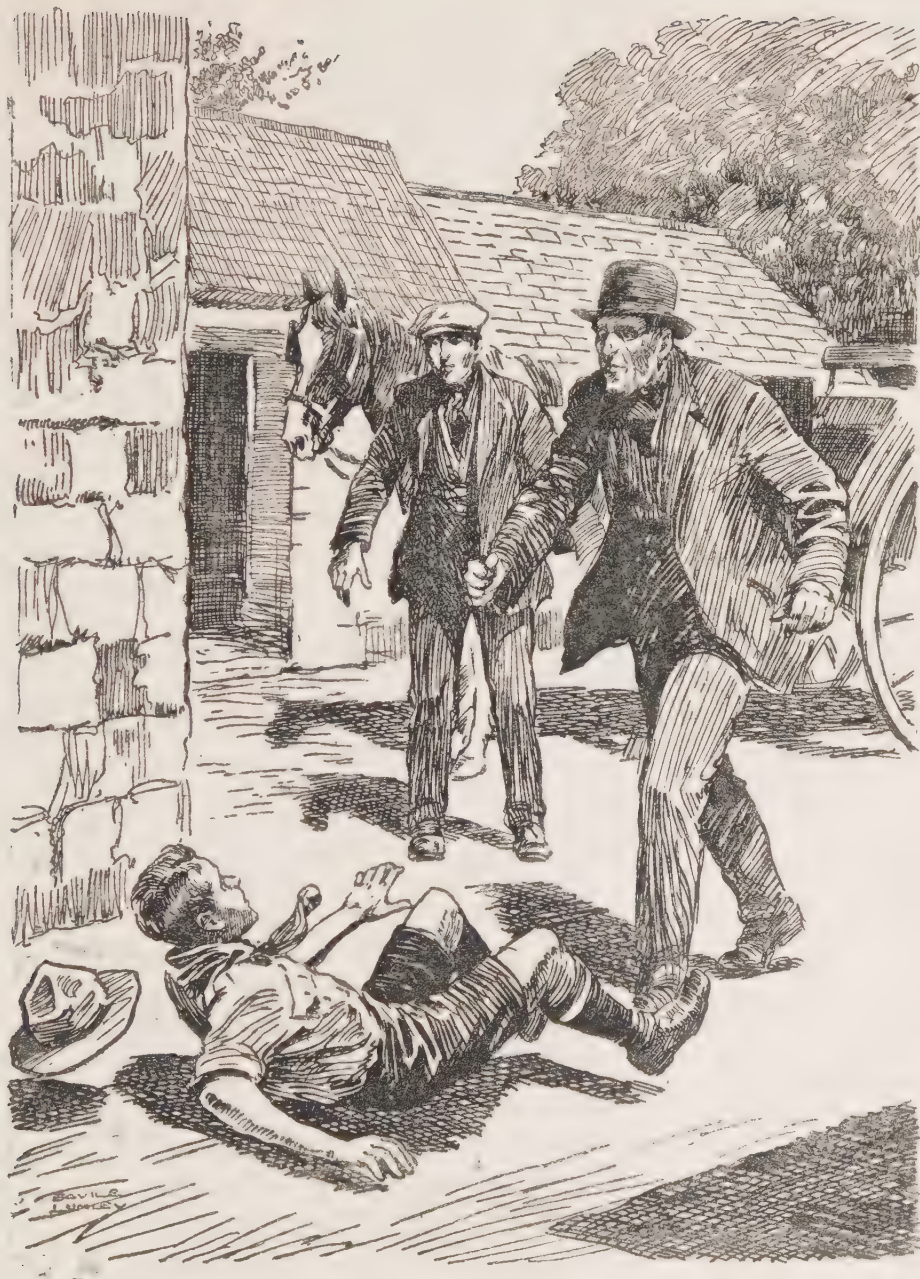
"They're in the—shed."

He produced a key from his pocket, and gave it to the man.

"Don't let 'em give me to the p'lice, Mr. Green," he wailed. "I'll never do nothin' of the kind again."

The man opened the door of the shed, and there were the major's prize fowls.

"You see," explained Mr. Green, "'e ain't quite all there, as you



"WHAT ARE YOU DOIN' OF 'ERE A-BREAKING INTO MY OFFICE?"

THE MAJOR'S PRIZE FOWLS

might say. I hope as Major Tollemache won't make a fuss about this little bus'ness, now that he'll get 'is fowls back again."

"I'm sure he won't," replied Jennings; "but you had better come with us and explain."

About an hour later a light spring-cart drove into the major's paddock. In the cart were the builder and the three Scouts, and in a crate were the fowls.

"Entirely my own fault; entirely my own fault," said Major Tollemache, when the matter had been explained to him. "I could see that young fellow gaping when I was boasting about the value of the fowls. It is wonderful how cunning those half-witted chaps can be."

"Ah! It was cunnin' of 'im to borrow my gum-boots," put in Mr. Green, "so as nobody wouldn't see 'is footmarks. I can't understand what 'e was goin' to do with the fowls, though. But there, there ain't no accountin' for what daft folks 'ud do. I 'ope as you ain't goin' to make trouble about it."

"Make trouble!" returned the major. "No, no; I'm too glad to get the birds back again. And it has been a lesson to me. I can see now, Farquhar, that these lads of yours are trained to use their intelligence. I congratulate you—I congratulate you. They do you credit, sir. 'Pon my word, if I were young enough, I'd—I'd be a Scout myself."



The Spell of Chikamagambe

By MAJOR J. T. GORMAN



KAZEMBI, panting, ceased to struggle for a moment, his wrists bleeding from his efforts to loosen the rawhide thongs.

Lying just outside the glow of the great fire, the boy's movements could not be seen. Any sounds which he made would not be heard above the thud-thud of spears on hide-covered shields, as the warriors stamped the war-dance in a great ring.

Nearer at hand the head-men sat, a silent circle, watching a weird, gesticulating figure. Naked, gaunt, with a face like a bare skull over which yellow parchment had been tightly stretched, Chikamagambe, medicine-man of the Mataiti, yelled and boasted.

And Kazembi, prisoner of the Mataiti, listened.

Necklaces of teeth and claws clashed and jangled round the witch-doctor's neck ; fringes of monkey-hair adorned his elbows and great knobbed knees ; above his hideous face towered a high head-dress of ostrich-plumes, and he waved a lion's tail wildly.

"Was it not I who led you against our enemies ?" he shouted. "Did not the warriors of the Mameza fall and bow down before us ? Did not Chimalambe himself, their chief, die of our spear-thrusts ?"

"Ay, ay !" came in a deep chorus from his hearers, and Kazembi, the fifteen-year-old son of Chief Chimalambe, uttered a low growl of fury under his breath as he heard.

"Have we not brought back much spoil—are we not greater than all the tribes of the land ?" Chikamagambe chanted. "And is it not I who have made you great, O men of the Mataiti ! Do not I, by

THE SPELL OF CHIKAMAGAMBE

my magic, rule the earth and the sky, the thunder and the rain, the beasts and the birds ? ”

“ Ay, ay ! ” again came the deep-toned answer.

“ Have I not set a mighty spell upon the valley, so that the elephants cannot come here, to trample and destroy the crops—so that the maize and the millet and the pumpkins grow safely and there is peace and plenty in our village ? Aha ! Am I not great—greater than the elephants themselves ? ”

“ Ay, ay ! ” the response thundered back ; but the boy prisoner gritted his teeth together and muttered fiercely :

“ Boaster ! Dog of a braggart ! Oh, if I could see you crushed and trampled in the dust—if I could revenge my father’s death upon you ! And I will—I will ! But first I must free myself.”

The boy began to struggle once more, wriggling, writhing, loosening a knot here and a twist there. Presently he had freed one hand, then the other, then both his ankles ; soon he was creeping away, silent as a shadow in the shadows.

None saw Kazembi’s escape. The warriors were dazed and excited with their dancing and with the native beer which they had drunk, and the head-men still listened to the witch-doctor’s boastings. The boy was soon clear of the last huts of the enemy village, the last pumpkin patches and maize fields, and had gained the track that led gradually upwards through the rocky ridges which hemmed in the valley—ridges so high that the moon had not yet risen above them.

As Chikamagambe had said, the home of the Mataiti was safely ram-parted ; this one track alone led into it, the age-old road of the elephants, through which for centuries the mighty beasts had made their way into the fertile valley.

Trodden and beaten by numberless thousands of great feet, taking always the same track, winding round jutting rocks, rising by degrees from the valley, the road lay plain and clear—that road which the medicine-man claimed to have forbidden to the elephants by his spells and magic.

It was true that for two years and more none of the huge, destructive beasts had ravaged the Mataiti, so that the tribe had grown prosperous and fat and warlike. But pausing, just where the road bent sideways, out of sight of the valley, into a rocky kloof, Kazembi’s eyes, quick and observant as those of a forest animal, grew still brighter with sudden understanding.

THE SPELL OF CHIKAMAGAMBE

The boy looked at his surroundings more attentively.

High cliffs on one side, just round the bend ; the tossed and tumbled dry bed of a torrent, far below, skirting the track on the other. He saw that—and something else, too.

Kazembi chuckled softly.

“ So *that* was thy spell, O Chikamagambe ! ” he muttered. “ What if I also could work magic ? We shall see ! ”

The boy hastened on. For some half-mile or less the trampled track led between high rock walls ; then, from the bottle-neck of the pass, it emerged into a dense tangle of jungle, and so, through the undergrowth, into more open country, where the trees were scantier, and the light of the moon shone everywhere through the branches.

The boy paused, standing like a slim bronze statue in the silver mist. Then, thrice, he gave a cry—the low, wailing note of an owl. After the third repetition he waited ; but almost at once came an answering owl-cry, and then, between the trees, a man’s shape—and another—and another.

Running towards him, the first, a huge fellow, with a yet-bleeding spear-wound in his shoulder, raised his hand in salute ; the others followed, hailing the boy as chief ; for these were the warriors of the Mameza tribe, followers of the dead Chimalambe, who would now follow his young son.

When perhaps twenty had assembled, Kazembi spoke.

“ Are all here ? ”

“ All that are left, Inkoos,” the big man answered. “ The rest—are with Chimalambe. But we are still a tribe.”

“ Still a tribe—yes ! ” the boy echoed. “ And a tribe who will be revenged upon its enemies.”

“ Some day, when we are strong,” the tall warrior, Ulami, said gravely, whilst the others murmured approval.

“ Rather, now—when we are weak ! ” Kazembi cried ; but Ulami only smiled at the boy’s eagerness, for he and the rest were very weary with the fighting of the past days.

They all lay down presently and slept in a thicket of dry, sweet-smelling shrubs—slept so long and soundly that before any woke the sun had taken the place of the moon, and was itself low in the sky, drawing towards late afternoon.

Kazembi roused himself first, stretched, yawned, and sat up. They had been sleeping on the crest of a little hill ; below them was a grassy

THE SPELL OF CHIKAMAGAMBE

valley, between two forest-covered slopes—the valley through which ran the elephants' road, after leaving the gorge.

The boy's quick ear had caught a sound, and, at first, it had seemed to him like that tramp and clash of armed men which had told of the enemy marching upon the Mameza village. But no, this was different; snapping—rustling—sharp crashings!

Kazembi peered through the bushes and clicked his tongue.

A bare half-mile away monstrous grey shapes were moving along the valley, moving at a slow, majestic pace, unhurried, relentless. Now and then a trunk was tossed up to drag down a branch, or a great forehead lowered to ram a maum-tree and bring it crashing down, with a shower of plum-like fruit.

They were silent, for the most part, that herd of mighty beasts, two hundred and more perhaps; only the noises of their destruction went with them; and behind were broken branches, uprooted and splintered tree-trunks, the ground gashed and torn by great tusks—a broad wake of ravaged country.

Leading the herd, his enormous shape towering high above the backs of the others, was a huge bull, with widespread tusks gleaming, twelve feet high at the shoulder, and the largest elephant the boy had ever seen.

The others were stirring, and Kazembi whispered a single word over his shoulder, raising his hand in warning.



"I GO WITH THE OTHERS TO BREAK THE SPELL OF CHIKAMAGAMBE."

THE SPELL OF CHIKAMAGAMBE

“ Nkhlovu !—elephants.”

Ulamí gathered up a handful of dry sand and let it sift through his fingers, to test the way of the wind.

“ It blows this way—they will not scent us,” he grunted approvingly. “ Wow ! A big herd—how they would ravage the country of the Mataiti, were it not for Chikamagambe’s spell.”

“ Were it not for the spell,” the boy repeated. “ How if we could break it, Ulami ?—how if I know the way ? ”

The older warriors smiled incredulously, and Ulami muttered that it was ill meddling with magic. But Kazembi’s quickly-working wits were busy completing the plan which he had begun to form as he escaped from the valley of the Mataiti. He spoke with the eagerness of a boy, and the authority of a chief.

“ Ulami—Umfoosa—Rafala ”—he named seven of the broadest and strongest of the men—“ you will come with me. And you others—listen. Work round behind the elephant herd, close in upon them, driving them towards the pass—towards the country of the Mataiti. Shout—stamp—light torches—somehow they must be driven.”

“ But—the spell, Inkoos ! ” one of the men stammered.

“ I go with the others to break the spell of Chikamagambe,” Kazembi said gravely. “ By moonrise it will be done.”

The boy started with his men at once, moving with care, keeping well to windward, that they might not alarm the herd. A big circuit was necessary in order to reach the pass unnoticed by the elephants, but at last they were at the place where Kazembi had paused, where a few steps more would take them round the bend, within sight of the valley and the village of the Mataiti.

The sun was very low now ; there was not much time to carry out the boy’s plan, for if they waited too long after nightfall the elephant herd would probably disperse, seeking fresh food. No, it must all be done very soon ; and they were standing now beside a huge mass of rock, twenty feet high by twice as much in circumference, unclimbable, smoothly surfaced.

The warriors stared at it ; the boy-chief laughed and pointed.

“ We must move that, O my people ! ” he said. “ Move it—send it down there, into the river-bed.”

“ Inkoos, it is as big as a head-man’s hut,” Ulami protested. “ How can we move it—we seven men only and one young lad ? ”

But the last words spurred the boy to action and to anger.

THE SPELL OF CHIKAMAGAMBE

"Fools—weaklings!" he cried. "Surely you, too, are bound by Chikamagambe's spells! Look—see what I have seen—open those blind eyes of yours and look!"

He showed them where the torrents of the rainy season had undermined the huge rock, eating away the earth, so that it hung poised, and it seemed that a touch might move it. But the touch would have to be that of a giant's hand.

"Dig!" Kazembi ordered peremptorily. "Dig with your spears—shovel out the earth at the sides, underneath. And quickly!"

The men obeyed, working away at the earth under each side of the towering mass. And, as they worked, they heard faintly, from the valley of the Mataiti, the sounds of drumming and singing, which told that the triumphant war-dances were beginning again.

The boy's eyes brightened at the sound, but by now he was too busy and too wearied to laugh. The work was terribly hard, and still the great stone was unmoved, even though, between them, two of the men had dragged up the fallen trunk of a young tree to serve as a lever.

And now there came another sound, louder, and from the opposite direction. Tramping—shrill trumpetings and lower roars—shouts—all this told that the rest of Kazembi's men had done their work well and quickly—almost too well and too quickly. They were driving on the elephants; the herd was coming. As things were, it would be here too soon.

The young chief set his teeth fiercely, and worked more desperately than ever—worked until the sweat poured down his brown body, and his arms ached unbearably. The others worked, too, until, in a moment, with a yell from Kazembi, it had happened.

"Keep back—keep back!" he shouted. "Stand clear!"

The great stone tottered for a second, then fell with a crash down into the torrent bed far below, sending the thundering echoes of its fall away amongst the ridges, whilst the boy shouted in triumph, waving his spear.

"The spell is broken—Chikamagambe's spell is broken!" he cried. "The road of the elephants is open once more!"

For it was the great stone which had blocked the elephants' road, fallen across it from the crags above, so that there was only room for a slim human body to pass. Unclimbable by any creature except a monkey, it had lain there, barring the pass—doubtless at the bidding of the witch-doctor.



The great bull—the leader of the herd—strode out from the shadows of the kloof

THE SPELL OF CHIKAMAGAMBE

But since then the rains had so undermined it that it had now fallen once more—at the bidding of Kazembi, son of Chief Chimalambe.

The last echoes died away, and the boy waited breathless. Would those sounds have stampeded the elephants in the wrong direction—set them trying to break backwards, out of the pass? Had his plan succeeded—had it failed?

He crouched with Ulami just below the level of the beaten track now left clear once more, just where the valley opened out into sight below. They clutched their spears, waiting—watching—wondering whether the sounds they heard were really a thud-thud of great feet or only the blood beating in their own ears.

Then, suddenly and unexpectedly, the great bull—the leader of the herd—strode out from the shadows of the kloof, and paused for a moment just above them as they crouched, motionless and silent as a huge elephant of ebony.

For a moment only. Then he flung up his great, corrugated trunk, and sent a ringing, trumpeting roar echoing down into the valley—a summons to the herd, a challenge to the village below, a cry of triumph and fury mingled.

Majestic, magnificent, the mighty creature stood there, one foot raised, with an air of conquest, his deep-set eyes gleaming, his white tusks flung out, his great flapping ears standing out dark against the orange-red circle of the rising moon.

Then from behind him came trumpeting and trampling, as the rest



THE GREAT STONE FELL WITH A CRASH DOWN INTO THE TORRENT BED FAR BELOW.

THE SPELL OF CHIKAMAGAMBE

of the herd charged on, and he strode downwards, leading them again to the valley, from which, on the night air, rose the scent of fields and orchards.

The villagers had seen and heard by now. From the huts rose cries and shouts of "Nkhlovu ! Nkhlovu !"

And from the circle round the fire a gaunt, gesticulating figure was pushed forward by those behind—Chikamagambe, the medicine-man—the one hope of the tribe against those huge, terrible shapes marching down upon them.

"Work a spell, O Chikamagambe !" they shouted. "Drive the elephants back by your magic ! Save us quickly !"

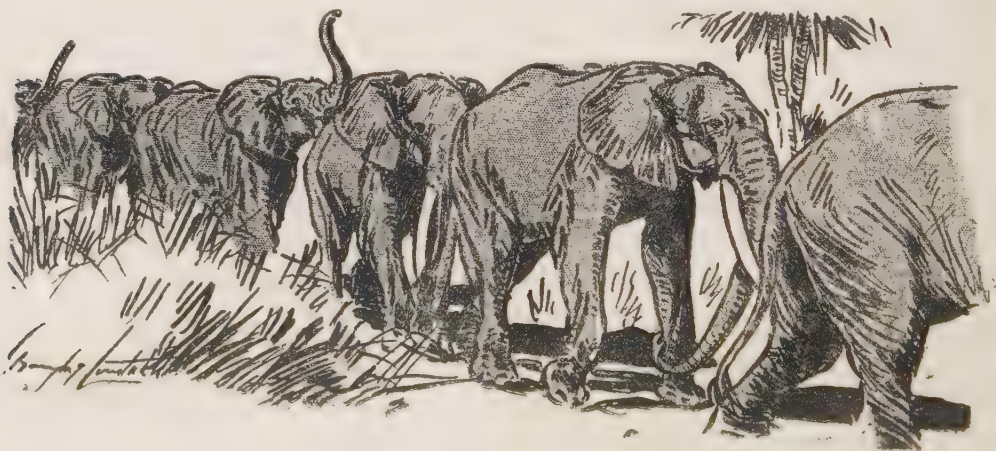
But the spells of the witch-doctor had turned against him, and broken in his hands. For a little distance he was urged on by the head-men, on towards the advancing elephants, until in sheer panic they dared go no farther, but turned and broke and ran—ran for their lives towards the hills that fringed the valley.

One amongst them did not escape. Chikamagambe slipped and fell right in the path of the great bull-elephant.

He was caught up in the coil of a lashing trunk—flung down, stamped upon ; and the elephants marched on down to the fields and the orchards, to devour and trample and destroy.

And Kazembi, who had avenged the death of his father and opened the road of the elephants once more, stood where the great bull had challenged the valley, whilst his warriors thudded with their spears upon the rocks and gave him the deep-voiced salute of a chief :

"Bayete—Inkoos !"





Captains Ashore

A Bo'sun's Yarn, set down by

LAWRENCE R. BOURNE

“**C**AMP cleaned up—all fatigues done, sir ! ”

The Patrol-Leader saluted, and the Scoutmaster gave an approving nod.

“ All right, Watson. You can trot round for half an hour. We'll commence camp fire at eight o'clock sharp.”

The Scouts were not slow to avail themselves of the permission, and at once scampered away towards the seashore, which was no farther away than across the next field.

Broad-Hollow Sands were deserted ; the summer picnic parties had packed up and gone home to Paignton or Torquay. No one was in sight save a grizzled old man wearing a peaked cap and, in spite of the heat, a heavy blue pilot-cloth suit. He was leaning on the top bar of a gate close to the shore, and seemed to be watching the approach of the Scouts with a friendly eye.

Billy Watson not only saw him, but called attention to him. “ Seems to be something familiar about him,” he remarked. “ Wonder what he's watching us for.”

“ Reminds me of the old boy we met last year in Dorset,” said another Scout ; and then, as they drew nearer, there was a general shout of recognition. “ Why, it's the old Bo'sun ! ”

The Patrol-Leader gave a hail : “ Bo'sun, ahoy ! How are you ? ” and a Tenderfoot was dispatched to inform the Scoutmaster of the unexpected meeting.

CAPTAINS ASHORE

"Why, now, by the great shark hook, who'd have expected meetin' you lads down here! You do travel about."

"What about yourself, Bo'sun—aren't you living Weymouth way?"

"Ay, ay—still got my snug little anchorage there; but I put in here to get a squint at Brixham Regatta, day arter to-morrow—and I'm stayin' a couple o' nights with a niece o' mine what's married a skipper o' one o' they ketches."

The Scouts dragged their by no means unwilling captive back to the camp, and he was informed that he had arrived just in time for a camp-fire yarn.

"Well, I'm glad to see you all ag'in," said the old man, when he was comfortably settled on a log seat and had got his pipe well alight. "I've often reckoned as how some of you lot ought to go to sea. You're the right shape to make handy sort o' sailormen."

"One of the boys you met last summer is now an apprentice with the Shaw Saville," said the Scoutmaster.

"Is he now? An' a fine line to be with."

"Yes; Ginger Brown."

"Ay, well, I sort o' remember him. He reminded me of Ginger Harris what sailed as 'prentice on the old *Bulrush* when I was bo'sun of her. Fine type o' ship, them old Bull Line boats. Let's see, I told you about the *Bullfrog*, didn't I? Well maybe you'd like to hear about Ginger Harris on the *Bulrush*?"

A howl of delight from the Scouts assured the old man that he was on the right tack.

"Well, as I was a-saying, Ginger Harris shipped as 'prentice on her under Cap'n Homer Davidson, an' a fine old sea-dog he was, too. Proper outspoken like—knew his job from truck to kelson, an' didn't care for nobody. I reckon he took a fancy to young Ginger—though, true enough, about the first thing he said to him had a clip on the ear behind it what sent Ginger into the lee scuppers.

"I was just overhauling a bit o' gear in the mizzen shrouds when Ginger, who didn't know it wasn't ettykate to speak to the skipper till he was asked, said, 'Your family must have been strong on poetry, Cap'n.'

"The Old Man glared at him, an' the mate, who was walking to loo'ard, shoved his hand across his mouth to hide a grin.

"What for?' says the skipper, sharp like.

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“ ‘ Well, sir, to have given you the name of Homer, after the great poet.’ ”

“ Smack went the old bloke’s hand, and away went Ginger. What for, says you? Well, you see, the Cap’n’s father was a big pigeon-fancier.

“ No, there isn’t much connection between pigeons an’ the sea,” the Bo’sun went on, when the laughter had subsided; “ but it’s won’erful what a lot o’ sea-going men, ’specially captains, mates, an’ such-like, has a fancy for settling down in a country sort of place with a nice little cottage an’ a garden. There was Cap’n Giles what had the

Bulwark before she was sold for a coal hulk—he retired a bit since, an’ got a tidy sort o’ place—geraniums an’ ’sturtiums up the front walk, a couple o’ apple trees, an’ a tidy-sized bit o’ ground planted with taters and cabbages round the back.

“ He was proper enthusiastic, he was, ’t any rate for the fust year—reckoned he’d the biggest taters and finest cabbages in the village. Gave a big vegetable marrow to the Harvest Festival at the church, an’ some ladies strung it up over the pulpit; but in the middle o’ the sermon it carried away, an’ half killed the parson. Womenfolk can’t tie knots. Howsomever, what with digging an’ hoeing an’ such-like, Cap’n Giles got fed up, an’ when the next year come round he reckoned he’d let the garden run itself; he warn’t going to dig it.

“ Of course, this upset his missus, what had been as proud as him of the garden and had boasted of it to the neighbours; an’ as the weeds got up over everything an’ no diggin’ was done, she cut up rough. O’ course, to the neighbours she says, ‘ It’s the Cap’n’s rheumatism, but he’ll be better presently an’ get it in hand.’ Then she lets on to the Old Man. ‘ I’m goin’ away to my relations,’ she says, ‘ an’ I’m not comin’ back till this place is tidied up and dug proper.’ ”



“ THE OLD MAN GLARED AT HIM.”

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"Cap'n wasn't in the habit o' takin' orders, so says he, 'Go by all means. I'm cap'n o' this ship,' says he; 'you're only rated as mate.' Of course, that didn't make matters any better, so off she went. There wasn't a train handy at their station, so she walks a matter o' three miles to a junction. Cap'n saw as 'ow he was in for it proper, an' he would ha' given way, only he'd no fancy for digging that garden. Well, after about a week o' bachelor's life, when all the pots an' pans was messed up an' the china was gettin' cracked an' broke, he took a stroll to think matters over. Likewise he didn't go through the village, 'cause he'd begun to fancy folks was talkin' about him; an' being in a village, you can reckon he warn't far wrong.

"After making a matter of a mile inland he comes across a van belonging to a travelling show what had lost a wheel. There was half a dozen chaps tryin' to heave her up, and the owner going on tight-ropes 'cause that van was a sort o' museum, an' all sorts o' queer things in bottles an' such like had got adrift an' busted up.

"Cap'n Giles bears a hand, an' being a sailorman, he knew just how and when to put a bit o' weight into the job. They got it up all right, an' away they goes.

"Well, as the Cap'n was mopping his head with a big old handkercher, he spies some bones out o' the museum what had been left behind. First

he starts to kick 'em into the ditch, then he picks 'em up an' takes 'em home. When things was a bit quiet like, he digs a hole in his garden an' buries 'em, all except two, what he takes to the village policeman.

"'It's a murder!' says



"HE DIGS A HOLE IN HIS GARDEN AN' BURIES 'EM."

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the policeman ; ‘ an’ look ‘ere—whatever you says will be hevidence ag’in you. Where’s your wife ? ’

“ Cap’n says, ‘ Seein’ as how you’re talkin’ like that, I’ll say nothing.’

“ Well now, would you believe it, that there policeman fetches two of his pals, an’ they dug the Cap’n’s garden all over two foot deep, to find a clue an’ the rest o’ the corpse. O’ course, the Cap’n’s wife came back all right, pleased as Punch to see the garden nicely dug up ; an’ likewise, when the policeman was told they was the bones of a rang-tang, an’ not human bones at all, he wasn’t very civil for a bit.

“ Then there was Cap’n Climber, what used to be in the Levant trade for the ‘ National ’—he made a tidy bit an’ set his mind on retiring. Cap’n Climber had a wife what had a fancy for what she called ‘ County society ’—which means being in with the nobs what can’t afford to live in London, so does the heavy in the country.

“ Well, this ‘ere Cap’n Climber takes a nice little villa down our way an’ not so far as all that from my little cottage ; an’ Mrs. Climber starts out to be the lady. A red-faced, ginger-‘aired woman she was, an’ allus dressed in black ‘cause someone had told her it was genteel, with a hat big enough for an umbrella.

“ They makes a pretty tidy start on the job, an’ gets in with the vicar ; an’ one fine summer’s arternoon they goes out with a picnic—Cap’n an’ his missus, the parson an’ his, an’ a couple or so old maids, an’ a chap what used to play the church organ without being paid for it. All loaded up fair and proper with a cargo o’ grub, an’ pots an’ pans, same as might be you Scouts going off. They got to a nice place where there was grass an’ trees to their liking, an’ starts to make tea.

“ Now there was one thing Cap’n Climber couldn’t a-bear an’ that was tea. When he was at sea he used to have coffee for his breakfast, have a cold meat lunch with a bottle of lager, an’ a proper slap-up dinner, with some of that there red wine, of an evening. After that, if he was on the bridge, he would have cocoa for supper—proper sailor fashion ; but tea was pizen to him. O’ course his missus knew this, but she told him tea was genteel an’ he must pretend to like it.

“ Well, they got it all fixed up—tablecloth, fancy grub, an’ a kettle boilin’ over a fire of sticks in a ditch. The Cap’n sits down on a bit of a bank just astern of the crowd, an’ says, ‘ Thank you—you’re wery polite,’ when they handed him a cup o’ tea. He holds it on his knee while he chews a sandwich. ‘ Drink up your tea, my dear, an’ have



" ' PRAY, CAPTAIN, MODERATE YOUR LANGUAGE.' "

another cup,' says his wife, sweet as could be. ' Thank you, my dear—very nice,' says he, casting his eye round for a chance to heave it clear. Close by his knee he spots a hole, an' when the folks were looking t'other way, he poured the whole lot down ; then hands the cup, polite as you like, to his missus.

" But he didn't get a second cup—not he nor anybody else. That little hole, what looked like what anybody might ha' made with a walking-stick, was the front door to a wapses nest ; an' out they came, too, mad enough to tackle anything—dozens, scores, hundreds—and every one had got his stinging-gear ready for work.

" Up jumps the picknickers, slappin' and slammin' with the first thing what came handy ; but the little terrors got home all right, an' then the crowd began to yell. Cap'n got several on him all at once, an' talked same as if he was having a row with a Dago harbourmaster. His missus tried to stop him, but a couple of 'em landed on her face, and she yelled.

" The vicar, who was batting away at 'em with a bread-an'-butter plate, stopped an' said, ' Pray, Captain, moderate your language ' ; then some of 'em found him, an' he said things he used to say when he was at college. It was three weeks before Mrs. Climber could tell the

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Cap'n her opinion of things, an' when next rent-day came round they moved to Southampton, an' gave up County society."

The ole Bo'sun took a deep breath. "But I was tellin' you about Ginger Harris who was along with Cap'n Davidson. Cap'n Davidson's retired now, but he don't fancy no seaside village; got a nice little 'ouse up in London, an' when he wants to see a bit o' shipping he takes a stroll round London Docks.

"Mind you, he don't find living ashore such a simple job as having a proper ship's saloon, and his stateroom, and steward, and such-like. He reckons there's too many fancy trimmings about a house, an' when he told me what happened to him, I said the same.

"It must be a couple o' months ago now, Mrs. Cap'n Davidson says as how they must go to the seaside, and picks on Southsea—which is Portsmouth. Well, the Cap'n didn't raise no objections; he just turns up a shippin' list, an' finds as a steamer runs from London Docks to Portsmouth Saturday nights an' Wednesdays, an' says he'll book berths; but his missus says she's going by train, like a Christian, being no ways fond o' the sea; so they goes to the station in London, an' gets in a Portsmouth train.

"They'd been under way a matter of half an hour when the missus says, 'Did you turn off that gas stove in the bedroom after airing your shirt?' 'No,' says he. 'Didn't you?'

"Well, she starts to let on. That there gas stove'd burn tuppence ha'penny an hour—five bob a day—an' they were off for three weeks! It meant five pound on the gas bill an' maybe set the house afire.

"'Let it!' says the Cap'n. 'It's insured full risks, including Act o' God an' King's Enemies'; but that didn't suit his wife, so he had to get out at the next stop, and after waiting two hours for a train back to London, got one what stopped at all stations, an' landed him there about second dog-watch. Well, being late, he takes a taxi-cab back to his house, what cost him ten bob; an' after spending some time telling the driver he was several sorts o' shark, he finds his wife has got the door-key. He put in about five minutes expressin' his feelings, then picks up a stone an' breaks the front window. He climbed up and was unfastening the latch when a policeman drifts up, blows his whistle, an' arrests him.

"Well, it took all the evening to prove who he was, as well as another ten bob to soothe the policeman's feelings after what the Cap'n had called him. Then he goes back an' gets in through the window an' goes

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upstairs, and there was the stove all turned out good and proper.

"What with stayin' there all that night and half next day whilst a chap mended the window, it took the Cap'n two whole days down on the foreshore at Portsmouth to say all he had to say—ay, some o' them boatmen talk about it yet : they say they never heard anything like it.

"Mind you, it ain't quite fair for folks to expect a sea-goin' man to get into shore-goin' ways all at once. Cap'n Judson of the old *Harkaway*, what used to trade out to Iquique, was a tidy sort o' chap—good-natured too; always ready to do anybody a good turn, same as you Scouts. He settled down here in the West country, an' being sensible like, paid a man to dig his garden, while he used to walk out on the cliffs with his old glass, an' reckon up what was doing out on the water. Always willing to help, he was, an' the fishermen used to listen to him, till one day he sent all hands racin' out to sea after a shoal of herrin', what turned out to be a dead porpoise the gulls was feedin' on.

"One day he spots a nice howdy-do on the shore about a mile away—two men trying to drag a woman down to a boat; fightin' like mad they were. He looks at them for a minute or two, then sets off at his best speed, which weren't nothin' to talk about, bein' as he was well over fifteen stun, an' old with it.

"Howsomever, he clapped on all his canvas, an' reaching a gap, he goes down the cliff—got on his beam ends a time or two, smothered with muck an' weed, an' half-blind with sweat. Anyway, he got down, an' there sure enough was the woman an' the two men scrappin' like cats. She must be a good plucked un, thinks he, to have kept 'em off so long, an' with a rush he joins in. Well, he hadn't been mate an' master of a sailin' ship for over forty years without learnin' where to put his hands, an' them two swabs got laid out like fo'c'sle hands what



"A POLICEMAN DRIFTS UP, BLOWS HIS WHISTLE,
AN' ARRESTS HIM."

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had cheeked a second mate. An' then, lo, and behold, instead of the lady thankin' him, she ups an' calls him seven sizes of a fool; an' when she stops to get her breath, a little fat chap, talkin' like a foreigner, rushes up an' says the same. Says he, 'You big fat idiot!—you clumsy pig! this is the fort' time we have shoot it,' an' you have spoiled the film!' 'Well, I'm blowed,' says the Cap'n, looking round, an' seein' a lot o' people all laughin' round a big camera what he hadn't noticed afore. 'Well, I'm blowed—a pack o' bloomin' picture-play actors.' "

"And what about Ginger Harris?" asked one of the Scouts.

"Oh, he's as bad as the rest of 'em. He's skipper of a ten-thousand tonner now, an' has made a tidy bit o' money. I ran up alongside of him in Southampton. He chaffed me for swallowin' the anchor—which is a sailorman's way of sayin' comin' to live ashore—an' said as how he was going to retire after a bit, an' have a house round Southampton way, an' a nice little ten-ton yacht to keep him from gettin' stale. 'Take a lot to make Cap'n Harris stale. Anyhow, I guess he'll be gettin' into more trouble pushin' a ten-tonner round them creeks than in takin' his big tramp out to Australia. Why, there was a cap'n what was with the Cunard—he knew the Atlantic like a landsman knows his own backyard. He set out from Cowes in a little cutter called the *Lily*, an' thought he could make his way up Beaulieu River. Well, if I was to tell you . . . Why, bless my heart, it's half after nine! Good-night, my lads! an' just you make a field-day watching Brixham Regatta.' "

"Right-oh, Bo'sun! Good-night!"





THE man who has much to do with wild animals—the hunter and trapper is the man I have more particularly in my mind—will almost certainly be of the opinion that human beings and animals have a great deal in common. Men vary in character, disposition, and personal qualities ; the creatures of the wild no less so.

Not all men are brave ; some animals are cowardly ; but there are others that for sheer courage and reckless disregard for consequences equal the fuzziest of the desperate Fuzzy-Wuzzies of the desert. Even that quality of human courage which we call heroism, the essence of which is self-sacrifice, has its parallel in the brute kingdom. Almost invariably, however, the heroes of the animal kingdom are heroines, due to the assertion of the maternal instinct for the preservation of their young. I have never yet come across an instance of deliberate sacrifice of its own life by any male wild animal.

That animals have a sense of humour no man of any trained experience will deny. Some of the cow-ponies I have known, or seen, surely had this sense. Nothing else explains the appearance of meekness and resignation with which some notorious “ buckers ” allow themselves to be mounted by an uninstructed rider, whom they are secretly intending to buck into the middle of next week ten seconds later.

And was it or was it not a sense of humour that prompted a wolverine to steal the snowshoes of an enraged Indian hunter who had camped on the brute’s trail and, according to custom, had stuck the *racquettes* upright in the snow far enough away from his fire to prevent

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the heat warping the wood? Certainly it wasn't hunger. Even a wolverine can find little to eat in a pair of snowshoes; and this one wasn't starving, for the previous night it had put away twenty pounds of deer meat belonging to the hunter.

Perseverance, "stick-to-it-tiveness" is one of the most laudable of qualities; without it few men will make good. Most of the wild creatures are particularly well endowed with this quality. There have been men who have wished that it were otherwise. As with human beings, some animals have a higher degree of perseverance than others. Bears, for example, are most difficult to turn aside from any intention once they have set their mind upon it. Here is an interesting illustration. It is not a first-hand experience, nor even a second; the man from whom I had it had the story related to him by one of the chief actors. He believed it; and, knowing what I do of bears, I see no reason to discredit it.

Two miners were wintering near their claim high up in the mountains of Colorado. They were more than "twenty-five miles from nowhere," but had selected to stay, taking the risks of winter, for the purpose of completing a tunnel on their property. Supplies ran short, and it was arranged that one of them should take their mule along to the nearest town through the snow (you can get from twelve to twenty feet of this in a Colorado winter!) and replenish the stores. Such a trip was no picnic, but it was preferable to starving.

On the way back, the mule did what was not surprising—tumbled into a drift, which necessitated unloading before it could be lugged out. While engaged in repacking, the miner happened to look back, and he caught sight of three bears. One was old, two were a fair size: evidently a mother and her cubs that the fine, mild weather (for spring was coming along) had tempted from the hole where they had been lying up during winter. Their muzzles were pointing up, and they were acting as if excited. The wind was blowing from the man back along the trail, and he concluded the bears had caught the scent of a couple of large hams that formed a valuable item of his supplies.

The miner decided he'd better get a move on. Though the bears might not attack him, they might make things so awkward (he wasn't armed) that he'd be driven to abandon his convoy to them. The last he saw of them (as he supposed) was their clawing around in the snow where the repacking had taken place.

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Supper over, the miner was sitting on his bunk smoking, while his partner washed up, and both heard something moving under the window outside. The miners owned a big dog, and supposing the dog wanted to get in, the man shouted to it to go to the shack door, which was standing open. This door was at one end of the shack; the window, a real glazed window, being at the other end. The next moment there was a bang on the window, the woodwork was smashed, and the glass sent clattering on the floor.

"Bears! The door!" yelled the smoker, jumping up as he saw a bear's head thrust into the shack through the demolished window, and he threw his pipe in the animal's face.

His partner realised the situation at once, picked up a tin plate and slung it at the bear, quickly following with a second. The head vanished, and both men dashed across the floor to close the door. But the bear was quicker than they; and though the slamming door caught her on the nose, she refused to back out. Had it not been for the young bears, her greater weight would have shoved back the two desperately struggling men. But the cubs had followed their mother, helped to jam her in the doorway, and she, resenting this, turned to correct them. The door was closed and its heavy wooden bar shot into place.

Annoyed, the bear started with her paws on the door, banging away at it, while the men started to break up their sleeping-places and contrive struts out of the heavy side-boards. Suddenly she turned her attention to the window again, and the men struck at her with heavy steel drills. With angry roars she withdrew, and after pacing around the shack for some time, tapping here and there, became quiet.

"She's gone," one said.

"She ain't. She's thinkin' up some more devilry," dissented the other. "She gotten th' whiff o' them hams all right, an' she means stayin' till she gets 'em."

"Pitch 'em out through the window," the partner suggested, "or she'll bring down th' whole show"—by no means an impossibility; for during the brute's frantic struggles when fixed in the door, both men had felt the whole fabric of the solidly built shack tremble and give. Given a good purchase, a few hundred pounds of hungry bear can make itself felt.

The other miner shook his head. "Them two hams wouldn't no more'n just take th' edge off their appetities. They'd want six



HE THREW HIS PIPE IN THE ANIMAL'S FACE.

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at least. They wouldn't believe them two was all we had inside, and they'd stay here t' get th' rest."

Just then a scraping sound by the door told the waiting inmates that a new idea had struck one of the bears—probably the mother: efforts were being made to tunnel under the door. This was too big a business, however, for the tunnelling soon ceased and all was quiet. The silence lasted so long that the younger miner took heart.

"Reckon they've quit," he said. "All th' same, I'm makin' a run for Joe Lancaster's cabin; I know he's left a Winchester there an' she's loaded."

His partner agreed, and as quietly as possible the man shoved himself through the shattered window and made for one of the near-by cabins. Half-way to it, a loud "Woof!" informed him that the bears were still on hand, though lying low. The miner made for the handiest tree and scrambled up it quickly. From this post he saw the three bears beat in the door and begin an investigation of the cabin belonging to Joe Lancaster. The last one was barely through the doorway when he slid down the tree and ran for his own shack. The bears heard him and pursued. The man won the race by a few lengths.

Again the perambulations around the shack started, punctuated by occasional smart pats on the door.

"Hope it don't come into their heads t' get on th' roof," said one of the miners.

The words were hardly out of his mouth when a heavy thump overhead indicated that that was precisely the dodge that had occurred to the besiegers—Mrs. Bruin, judging by the weightiness of the thump.

And now the two men, neither of whom was young, became really scared. The roof of the shack was of the usual kind—a thick layer of earth and sods laid over light larch poles. It was good enough to keep out heavy rain, even snow, but offered a poor defence to the sharp claws and strength of a hungry bear. To be shut up in that sixteen by sixteen shack with three lively bears was anything but a happy prospect. To keep the bear from tearing a hole in the roof was no easy business. The men tore their rude mattresses asunder, took out the hay filling, lighted bundles of it, and by leaning out of the window contrived to jerk the blaze upon the roof.

This was all right as long as the blaze lasted. The hay burned away, the bear resumed her scratching; and before long the mattress stuffing was exhausted. Then a bright idea came to one of the miners.

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"Fill up th' stove, partner," he directed. "Get a hot blaze goin' and get th' drills red hot. That'll fix her when she pokes her head through a hole."

Presently the hole appeared, a hole big enough to admit the bear's head, which the man, mounted on the table quickly dragged beneath the hole, could easily get at with the heated drill. Down came the head, up was thrust the drill; there was a roar of pain and anger, and a hasty ejaculation followed by a noisy clatter, as the miner, his eyes suddenly filled with the earth that showered down, fell off the table, upsetting it. But he was a fighter. Setting up the table, he sprang up again, shouting to his partner to bring him a hotter drill. But the partner had his own troubles at that moment—the two small bears that he had just noted trying to force themselves in at the window-frame. The cubs retreated from the hot drill whacking at their muzzles, and then the other miner, leaving for a moment the mother bear, whose head was again poking through the roof, ran at the hams, grabbed them, and slung them through the window.

At once there was a scrimmage for possession between the two cubs; the old bear heard it, was off the roof like a streak of lightning, and at once appropriated a ham.

The feast over (and while it was going on the men tore up the shack floor to barricade the door and window more strongly), the bears, satisfied for the time being, squatted down outside the door. And there they stayed until morning, the men standing by with their drills to defend the roof, until the sun rose, when all three shambled off.

Now this is a perfectly feasible and credible story—which a great many that are related of wild animals certainly are not. Fiction writers have, time and again, given thrilling descriptions of hair-raising fights between wolves and the lone travellers they have attacked. Well, I've not yet come across the Canadian hunter who could give first-hand evidence of such battles, or even believed they ever took place. A *voluntary* and unprovoked attack by *any* wild creature on an able-bodied human being is a distinct rarity. Hunger will make most creatures bold, but the quality that hunger most increases is persistence. Those three bears were hungry; hence their unwillingness, in spite of red-hot drills, to leave a spot where they knew food to be. But you can take the word of men who know, that a wild creature has to be *very* hungry indeed before it finds the nerve voluntarily to attack a man.

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I am sceptical, however, of another bear yarn, related from the side of a roaring Canadian camp-fire, telling how two H.B.C. trappers, a white man and a Cree, conveying the mail, were kept on the run for the better part of a day and a half between a couple of trees. Surprised while asleep by a large black bear, the white man shammed dead, very soon to get the idea that there'd be no need for shamming if the animal continued its vigorous patting and mauling. But the bear's attention being transferred to the red man, though he too shammed death, the white man leaped from his blankets and bolted for a convenient pine tree. The bear hurried after him, and the race was won by the narrowest of margins.

Instead of climbing the tree, the bear hastened back to the Cree, shoving and rolling the motionless body this way and that until he had shifted the man's feet into the heated embers of a big fire. This being too much for the man up the tree, he descended, making a demonstration with carefully shied stones to attract the bear and give his comrade a chance of getting away from the fire.

The bear, taking notice of the stone-thrower, gave chase, and for the second time the man won the sprint. But this time the bear started to climb after him. The man retreated, until, becoming aware that a strong branch of a near-by birch had thrust itself within the foliage of the pine, he scuttled along this and managed to descend the birch a few seconds ahead of the annoyed bear.

While this performance had been going on, the Cree had sought refuge up a second pine tree that grew on the other side of the birch, and close enough to receive several feet of a birch bough growing out on that side. Up the second pine climbed the white man, while the Cree, taking in the situation, climbed into the birch and from there into the first pine. The bear followed the white man, who scurried to the earth *via* the birch, then up pine No. 1, which the red man vacated, to scramble down the birch, pursued by the bear, while the white man was hurrying by means of the accommodating birch to pine No. 2. Then the chase would begin again, the bear this time after the Cree.

So for an indefinite number of hours the game went on—up one tree, down the other, and across to the third, sometimes the red man being the pursued, sometimes the white man. Occasionally there would be periods of rest, with the bear squatting in the birch tree and the men each occupying a pine. Always for Bruin the route was the



SO THE GAME WENT ON—UP ONE TREE, DOWN THE OTHER.

same—up a pine, down the birch, up the other pine. A queerer sort of vertical merry-go-round never took place. So mad was Bruin, it seemed likely he meant staying for ever, or until dizziness or exhaustion landed one of the two men between his claws. Fortunately this did not happen; the appearance of another bear not far away caught Bruin's attention during one of the restful periods, and he took himself off, though not, as the voracious narrator solemnly assured us listeners, without a mighty reluctant glance at his two tormentors.

There is another story I recollect hearing or seeing somewhere in which the laugh was very distinctly with the bear. The only doubt one has that this bear actually did chuckle heartily over the trick he played his hunters is that he was probably unaware how neatly he had scored off them.

Two hunters, having discovered a big bear ranging close to where they had made camp, set to work to construct a fall-trap. This was

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not the common "deadfall" that the Indian or professional hunter makes, but a big, log-built contraption something on the lines of a gigantic mouse-trap, with a door that drops automatically after the animal has been tempted within. The bear caught, the hunter can poke his rifle through a chink in the logs and safely pot Bruin, or, if he is a sportsman, stand on the roof, raise the trap-door, and chance a shot as the quarry bolts forth.

The bait proved persuasive, and when the hunters went to examine the trap, the bear was inside, biting and worrying at the solid green logs. Then arose an argument—one man would raise the trap-door, the other would shoot; but which of them should have the shot? Each wished the honour for the other. Finally, one suggested they decide the matter by a game of cards, the winner to have the shot, the loser to release the bear—a job anything but safe.

This was agreed to, and the men adjourned to a flat rock fifty yards away and were soon absorbed in a game of poker. As does happen sometimes, the luck fluctuated, and it was not until a couple of hours had passed that the winner raked in the loser's last cartridge—cartridges taking the place of coin. Then rifles were loaded, and the winner, having magnanimously presented his right to shoot to the loser, the latter took up a position for an advantageous shot. As he did so, his friend quietly climbed on the trap roof to lift the door. He stooped, gripped the length of rawhide, and an expression of the most acute disgust came into his face.

"Say," he called out, "while we been foolin' with them confounded cards, I'll be blowed if that blamed bear ain't been an' eaten his way out!"



Stumpy Brothers

By J. C. BRISTOW-NOBLE



SQUIRE FAITHFUL was puzzled, vexed, and disappointed. In his fifty years of experience as a landowner he had never come across poachers more difficult to catch than old Phil Luckman and his brother Ralph. He himself and his two elderly gamekeepers were fairly bested, as he put it.

It was a strange coincidence that, whilst old Phil had a club

foot, his brother Ralph had but one leg; and what was even more remarkable was that the latter was born with the leg missing. The two were twins and bachelors, and were known by the nickname of the Stumpy Brothers, because, of course, of their deformities. Both had spent years at sea as carpenters on merchantmen. Phil had long forsaken the calling; indeed, he had been settled in the little village of Trist for a good seven years, in an ancient stone-built cottage inherited from an uncle.

It was such an abode as one to whom the sea and country makes an equal appeal could be imagined inhabiting. It was a mile or so from any other human dwelling. A little distance away, beyond a belt of heather-covered moor, was the sea, and in all other directions was dense, dark woodland.

Phil worked by fits and starts, both at his trade of carpenter and as a rat and rabbit catcher, and poached at every favourable opportunity. Cleverer than most poachers, and in spite of the handicap of the club foot, he had never been caught at the bad business; and so it might have gone on till the end of his days if his brother Ralph had not turned up early one morning, saying he was sick to death of the sea, and had come to share his brother's lonely home.

Apart, the two were wilder than most wild fellows, and their wildness increased in proportion when they found themselves together; so, as you may guess, they were a pretty awkward pair. Take away

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the club foot of the one and the wooden leg of the other, and who could say which was which ?

They were nearly sixty years of age, and in height and stoutness there was not a fraction of an inch between them. They were equally grizzled, equally wrinkled and scarlet ; they dressed precisely the same in rough, sea-going clothes ; their high-pitched, domineering voices were as similar as the quacks of ducks ; they had precisely the same characteristics and mannerisms.

They were the best of company and the life and soul of the deadly dull countryside for a good two or three miles around.

In the inns what songs they would sing—always songs of the sea, of which they seemed to know no end—and what yarns they would spin of adventures in foreign lands !

Slow of foot and not over-fond of Shanks's pony, they got about in a small, rough cart drawn by a pair of lean, shaggy donkeys as cunning and in looks as wicked as themselves.

They were always accompanied by a few mongrel dogs, from desperate scarred and maimed little fellows to long-legged, swift-footed curs ; whilst their jacket pockets generally held a few favourite ferrets, as scarred, as crippled, and as disagreeable to look at as most of the tykes.

Bad a poacher as Phil had been when alone, the two together were ten times worse, and the old scoundrels openly gloated in their infamy. What is more, when muddled and excited with drink, which was pretty often, they would roar to be shown the man smart enough to catch them.

Squire Faithful was on the best of terms with the " gents of fortune," as they liked to call themselves, and as, indeed, they were, and they in their turn had never a word to say against him. On the contrary, they sang his praises morning, noon, and night, and when it became known to them that he was on their trail, they would actually drink to his success and strike up with the song, " For he's a jolly good fellow."

The rascals were popular, as men of their kidney generally are, and perhaps no one had a warmer spot in his heart for them than the Squire himself. Be this as it may, he always had an excuse ready on their behalf when reminded of their wrong-doing.

" What else can you expect," he would say, " from men whose ancestors for generations back were all pirates and cut-throats ? It's

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in their blood ; it must come out. Still, the law is the law, and if it can be stopped, it is our business to stop it."

A shooting season was rapidly slipping away, and although it was as clear as day that no end of game was being poached, not a twinkle of the end of it all was yet in sight. Night after night the Squire had been out, now alone, now with one of his men, but it had been in vain. There had never been a sound or sign of the miscreants, but only the hooting of owls and the wind moaning and sighing in the naked branches of the trees.

Again, although inquiries had been made, and the men had been watched in and out of the surrounding towns, it was as much a mystery where the game was being sold as when and how it was being got hold of. Never, the Squire confessed, had he come across smarter poachers. But the more determined was he on this account not eventually to be outwitted. Meanwhile, the pair were working less and drinking harder than ever.

Often they would leave their cottage in the afternoon in the donkey-cart and drive from inn to inn throughout the district, spending their ill-gotten money as freely on others as on themselves.

As the donkeys galloped along the desolate moorland roads in the darkness of the night, the old sailors could be heard singing their songs of the sea at the top of their voices.

The donkeys needed no guiding ; they had traversed the roads so often that they were familiar with every inch of them, and even on the blackest nights galloped their hardest.

Many a morning, after such an excursion, the faithful animals were to be seen pathetically pulled up at the poachers' garden gate, with the old reprobates sleeping soundly in the bottom of the cart, amongst dogs and ferrets, and snoring loud enough to be heard over half the parish.

At length the Squire decided to adopt another plan. He decided to keep a few nights' vigil with not only his keepers, but also the village troop of Scouts, which was divided into a couple of patrols, the Foxes and the Coyotes.

Great was the excitement amongst the boys when they heard the news, and they took the keenest interest in the preparations. They numbered just forty, so they chuckled as they declared that Phil's and Ralph's days as poachers were now numbered, at least for a time ; adding that if the forty of them could not run them to ground they

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would be duffers, and that it surprised them that the Squire had not thought to get their help long ago.

Not a word was said about the little scheme to a single soul whom it did not concern, and the boys went about their everyday duties as usual. The Squire laid his plans carefully. Punctually at ten-thirty, and in couples, the boys were to go direct from their cottages to allotted positions in the coverts, and keep a sharp look-out till four in the morning, and then go home as they came, that is, hugging the hedges and any other available cover, and not speaking above a whisper. Each couple was to carry a police whistle, and blow it in the event of the poachers being seen, and thus bring the whole little band down on the pair.

It was an exceptionally quiet, starlit night when the first vigil was kept. The boys got to their posts without hitch or adventure, the Squire himself, mounted on an Arab pony, taking what he believed might turn out to be the chief position; and through the long, cold hours they all watched—watched till they heard the great clock on the stables of the manor booming four. Then home all went, stiff and cold and depressed. Nothing had been seen or heard of the poachers.

“Never mind,” said the Squire, “we’ll try again.”

And they did try again, and again and again, but without result. An owl was seen occasionally, threading its way silently and wonderfully through the net-work of leafless branches overhead, and occasionally a rabbit, hare, or fox was heard running over the dead crisp leaves that carpeted the ground. But beyond the owls and footsteps on the leaves, and now and again the mournful song of the breeze, the woods were as silent and, to all appearances, as deserted as the grim, boundless desert.

It was very disappointing and mystifying, especially since pheasants were disappearing all the time and just as fast as ever. The Squire has often said since that during this period his iron-grey hair turned several shades greyer; that he would sit by the hour trying to get to the bottom of the problem, but that the more he probed it, the bigger mystery it became.

He decided to go forth with his little army once more, and then, if the crafty old sailors still eluded capture, to try to deal with them in some other way. On this last occasion all passed exactly as before till nearly three o’clock; then of a sudden the notes of whistles were heard.

“Listen!” cried the Squire to the Scout who was watching with



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him. No, it was not a mistake. The notes were as distinct as a church bell, although a long way away. It was a quiet, starlit night, and in a jiffy the Squire had the notes located.

"It's the keepers," he said; "old Shepherd and Billy in the three-cornered spinney," and he gave a laugh that seemed to indicate that he had little faith in the summons. He rode away at a brisk trot, blowing a horn that he himself carried, instead of a whistle, as he went; and from all directions there came the noise of the Scouts running and crashing through thickets.

The keepers, being old and a bit shaky on their legs, had been stationed where it was thought they would be the most likely to have nothing to do. On the Squire and most of the boys coming up to the old fellows, they found them huddled together and so scared that they could scarcely speak.

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"Look!" they stuttered in chorus and in a low voice, and pointed to the high road, which was about twenty yards away.

Squire and Scouts peered through the trees, and could just distinguish the poachers seated in their donkey-cart.

"What's up, Squire and laddies—a badger 'unt?" Phil cried; and then, bursting into the liveliest of their songs, the two drove on at a headlong gallop as usual.

The mouths of the two elderly watchers dropped open, and amazement took the place of the fear that possessed them a moment back.

The Squire began to ply them with questions, and none too gently, for he was as much annoyed as they were amazed. By degrees he gathered that, when first seen and heard, the sailors were driving along the road, and, indeed, that they did not stop before the blowing of the whistle.

"You old duffers!" he said. "There's nothing to do now but to go home and grin and bear the sneers and chaff with which the rascals will greet us for many a day to come."

To the Squire's way of looking at things there was now small chance of catching the poachers, and he himself began to slacken off in his look-out for them. The Scouts, however, encouraged by the Squire, continued to go out at night and watch at frequent intervals, and it chanced that they had not to wait so very long now before they had reason to congratulate themselves on doing so.

It was a bright, moonlit night, and a Patrol-Leader and a Scout were keeping vigil in one of the largest of the woods and near a spot where several pheasants were roosting.

Presently they became conscious of two big, ugly, long-legged dogs standing beneath the trees and looking up at the roosting birds with eyes almost as bright as stars. They recognised the dogs at once as belonging to the old sailors, and their hearts began to beat like sledge-hammers.

One of the dogs held something in his mouth. A second or two later the something had been put down and was racing up into the trees with the agility of a squirrel. The watchers' hearts beat faster and louder, and for a few moments they ceased to breathe. The creature was the poachers' most treasured possession—their tame polecat. They had procured this handsome species of vermin on the Continent a few years back, and from the first had used it regularly in their work as rabbiters, to the great interest of the whole countryside.

Like a flash the fierce and terrible little thing was among the

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branches of the trees, and bounding in big, sure leaps towards one of the pheasants.

The next thing the Scouts realised was that the creature had leaped on to one of the birds, fastened its needle-like teeth firmly in its victim's neck, and that the two, thus locked together, were crashing to the ground through slim, brittle branches. The two struck the earth with a thud, and the dogs sprang forward. One seized the polecat round the neck, firmly yet gently ; the other grabbed up the pheasant. Then, while the dog with the polecat lay down as flat as possible, the other made off at a gallop with the pheasant. The whole scene reminded the watchers of a wonderful piece of machinery in motion. It all went like clockwork.

The Patrol-Leader chanced to move and snap a twig beneath his feet with a crack, and the dog with the polecat was up on his feet the very instant and away. This, and the sudden appearance of the dogs, the little bloodthirsty polecat running up into the trees and leaping from branch to branch, and all the rest, left the two spell-bound. They had never seen anything so wonderful before. They remained quiet for a few more minutes, and presently, in the intense silence of the night, they heard the poachers' donkey-cart and the donkeys' hoofs on the high road a quarter of a mile away, moving in the direction of the old cottage down by the sea.

They concluded that the return of the dog with the polecat had been the signal to the sailors that it was dangerous to continue their novel poaching operations, and that they had at once accepted the warning and were making a hurried retreat. Both were deeply interested. Often had they seen the polecat bolting rabbits, and had noticed and commented on the excellent training of the dogs, who would not only retrieve the former, but also the men's ferrets as they left the rabbit burrows, and that without ruffling a hair, much less hurting them, yet holding them by the neck in such a way that they could not turn and bite them had they so desired.

The Patrol-Leader decided to take no steps at present to get the men arrested, as it was now in his power to do, but to inform the Squire of the thrilling discovery and to watch further and try and learn more.

Three days later the elderly mariners were rabbiting on a moor within half a mile of the self-same big wood. The Squire saw the men at their legitimate toil when out riding in the morning, and immediately hurried to the village, collected the Scouts, and very quietly posted

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them about the fields and woods, with instructions to keep a sharp look-out for the poachers' two long dogs.

The Patrol-Leaders, the Squire himself, and a few Scouts of each patrol hid themselves in a group in a wood near a small clearing where the pheasants were fed. It was a bright, clear day, and for the time of the year comparatively warm. Nothing of any moment occurred until about half-past three in the afternoon. Then of a sudden those in hiding near the clearing saw a dark object swoop like a hawk from an overhanging branch on to the back of one of the several fine cock birds that were searching amongst the fallen leaves for grain.

The object was recognised at once as the poachers' polecat. A terrible struggle began, but against so quick, intelligent, and powerful a foe the pheasant stood no chance whatever. In an instant the polecat's teeth were meeting in its neck, and, try as it might, it could not rid itself of so deadly a rider. At first it attempted to fly, and then, with a great flapping of wings, writhed on the ground. But the more it struggled the deeper the polecat bit, and the brighter its eyes blazed. At last, as the bird's struggles became weaker and weaker, for a moment the polecat released its hold and then seized it by the head. Barely half a minute later the fine pheasant lay still and dead.

Then, at this precise instant, the two big, ugly dogs dropped from the clouds, as it were, and whilst the one picked up the pheasant as before, the other again pounced on the polecat, and then they were galloping away, neck and neck, at a tremendous rate.

The watchers hurried to the edge of the wood, and the Squire, looking through a field-glass, was just in time to see the poachers hide the pheasant in their donkey-cart, which was close at hand, and put the polecat in a bag. Then his horn went to his lips, and over the silent countryside the clear, ringing notes echoed, mingled with the notes of the Scouts' whistles.

Phil and Ralph scuttled into the donkey-cart like rats into a hole, and the faithful donkeys set out for the little cottage at the usual head-long gallop. At the same time the Squire and all the boys began to run in the same direction.

When they reached the humble abode they found the donkeys pulled up at the garden gate, with their noses between their knees, stolidly indifferent to all that was going on, but there were no signs of the poachers. The cottage door was wide open, and the Squire hurried from room to room, but all were empty.



JUST IN TIME TO SEE THE POACHERS PUT THE POLECAT IN A BAG.

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Then several of the party chanced at one and the same time to glance at the sea, and a cry of despair went up. There were the poachers in their little boat a few yards out on the waves, the one busy rowing, the other setting the sail.

There was a mad scramble for the beach, but by the time the water's edge was reached, the boat was nearly a couple of hundred yards away, and there was not another handy in which to go in pursuit. Phil stood up and shouted something about being off to Ireland for a holiday, and that he was sure the Squire and the laddies would see that their cottage and belongings were not meddled with, and that their animals were fed and looked after during their absence.

The Squire laughed ; the Scouts howled. The sail filled and the tiny craft gathered speed, and soon was but a speck on the vast ocean ; but for some little time afterwards the men could be heard roaring their familiar songs about pirates and smugglers and other such things.

There was, and is still, a subterranean passage, centuries old, linking the cottage with the beach, and thus the men had contrived to make their escape, the passage being forgotten by the Squire and Scouts in the excitement of the moment.

Every day since that memorable afternoon some of the boys have visited the cottage, and with their own hands looked to the comfort and welfare of the donkeys, dogs, ferrets, and polecat.

Again, they have seen to it that the cottage itself, with its quaint old oak furniture, is kept clean and aired.

The village and district do not seem the same, and, indeed, are not the same, without the jolly, wild old sailor-men. There is a gap that cannot be filled, and it makes the heart ache trying to fill it. And, to tell the truth, no one is more conscious of the gap, and no one regrets it more, than the Squire himself.

Months have passed, but there has not been so much as a glimpse of the fugitives. Concerned as to their safety, the Squire has had inquiries made, not only in Ireland, but all the British Isles over, but without result. He has been unable to get tidings of the men. He can only presume that they have gone back to their old trade as ships' carpenters, and, aboard some vessel, are ploughing the high seas. But he does wish they would come back.

"I had no desire," he says, "to drive them away. I do not know that I had any real wish to have them punished, but I did want to get to the bottom of their secret as to how they were getting my pheasants."



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for Scouts**



Scenes from Queer Doings at
Aldborough By Richard Bird



OXFORD BOOKS